The Jains Through Time



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Veerayatan's Silver Jubilee
A Commemoration

An English Translation of 'Samay Ki Parto Mein' published to celebrate the Twenty Sixth Centenary of the birth of Tirthankara Mahavira

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Designed By:
The Design Factory
33 Newman Street, London W1T 1PX
www.thedesignfactory.co.uk

Published by:
Veerayatan U.K.
The Wentworth, Pinewood Close
Oxhey Drive South, Northwood,
Middlesex HA6 3ET

Acknowledgments

This book is a the quintessence of the wisdom of ages, the pure nectar of essential knowledge at different levels – the philosophical, the historic, the political, the wanton and even the spiritual.

To be involved closely with the publication of this unique book has indeed been for me an emotional journey. The enormity of the task was truly challenging; but that did not break the resolve of so many individuals who often worked day and night to overcome obstacles in the course of its publication. I am particularly deeply indebted to Sonal Dadia and Priti Shah for their help, patience and determination during the various stages of the production.

Above all, I must acknowledge Sadhvi Shilapiji's untiring efforts and contribution towards the completion of this project. Shilapiji's ability to combine in her vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East was indeed an asset that we all found hugely comforting when working with such a diverse team made up of the translator, editor, copy editor, designer and the publisher.

I feel honoured to have been part of this project.

Rohit Mehta
Veerayatan UK

Publisher's Note

The incident took place about three decades ago, but the memory of it is still as fresh as a newly opened lotus in the middle of a pond, with all its hundred petals basking in the crimson morning sunshine. Although the passage of Time can never really be impinged on, that event was so powerful and inspiring that it has left an indelible mark on it.

It was the twenty-fifth centenary of Tirthankar Mahavir's nirvana. Special commemorative projects were being planned for different places, but they were all centred on the big cities of India. It was then that the divine voice of that great sage Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj rang out in this legendary clarion call: 'The projects to commemorate Tirthankar Mahavir's twenty fifth centenary of nirvana should be located in Bihar; they should be conducted from the sacred sites where Tirthankar Mahavir was born, where he preached, practised *tapas* and where he attained nirvana.'

Many people heard this resounding call, but the words particularly touched the heart of Acharya Shri Chandanaji. She made a steely resolve to turn them into reality. Thus a tiny seed which was sown twenty five years ago has today grown into a huge banyan tree called Veerayatan. With its branches spreading far and wide, it provides a cool shade for every weary person that sits beneath it.

Veerayatan has successfully completed many worthwhile projects in its first twenty five years and established a sound foundation for the dissemination of the thoughts of Tirthankar Mahavir. On the auspicious occasion of its Silver Jubilee, a plan was made to publish an informative and inspirational souvenir. Acharya Shri Chandanaji assigned the responsibility for its execution to her capable and learned disciple, Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji. With hard work and total dedication, Shilapiji accomplished this commendable task within a short period of time. Her accuracy and the freshness of her approach have given it a historical significance. Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji is currently doing research at London University. She is also

successfully directing the multifarious educational programmes of Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth in Kenya and the United Kingdom.

Jainism by its very nature aims not only at the individual, but also at universal well-being. Veerayatan is an illustrious example, the concretisation of this ideal, and it stands there in all its grandeur for us to emulate. It is yet another link in the long chain of welfare activities conducted in different fields by the followers of Jainism throughout the ages. On the occasion of its Silver Jubilee, an attempt has been made to record all those historic contributions that have had such a notable impact on the growth and development of Jainism. At the same time the history ofVeerayatan, from the point of its conception to the present moment, has been chronicled in an enchanting style by Sadhvi Shri Sadhnaji. Her co-operation in the successful completion of this souvenir deserves much praise.

This volume glows with innovative thoughts of the great sage Gurudev Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji, who guides us to the 'path of knowledge', and those of Acharya Shri Chandanaji, who helps direct us to the 'path of action'. The book has flowered into four sections : (1) Jainism through the Eyes of Time, (2) Choose for the Good of One and All, (3) A Tribute, (4) Awake! Arise! Make an Effort Now. It is a great treasury of non-violent thinking and a universal code of living. Every single line of this book carries a message for building a strong and healthy nation replete with industry and character. In an array of published souvenirs, this one has its own distinct identity and is seminal as a thought-provoking philosophical work. We dedicate this receptacle of nectar, this source of sweetness, to humanity as a whole so that they can sip at its knowledge and dispense its elixir for the wellbeing of one and all.

The blueprint of the Silver Jubilee celebration plans was finalised on the occasion of *Gurupuja* on *Sharad Purnima* day in 1997. In the short span of a year, devotees from all over

the world lent their support to the project. Without their care and co-operation, this souvenir would never have been produced. It not only boosted our morale but also accelerated the completion of the book. We feel extremely proud and honoured and would like to thank the contributors from all four corners of the globe.

We would also like to heartily thank the members of the editorial committee for their tireless efforts in producing this outstanding work.

Our sincere thanks to all the trustees ofVeerayatan U.K, and in particular Mr. Rohit Mehta, who organised and co-ordinated the publication of this work. There is a long list of helpers, whose quiet contribution to the project has been invaluable. Our appreciation and thanks to them for all their hard work.

Tansukh Raj Daga
Secretary
Veerayatan, India

Editor's Note

To translate a work like this you have to have determination but more than that you have to have love. Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji has brought about this English translation through love. Working with her has been both a challenge and a joy. Vivek Iyer, who started the translation, was unable to complete it due to unforeseen circumstances, but we are most grateful to him for doing a lot of the groundwork. Nileshwari Kothari writes from the heart and this has been evident in her literal translations of some of the articles. We would like to thank her for her invaluable contribution.

Elaine Wallace

Foreward



Dr. L. M. Singhvi, M.P.
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Former Indian High Commissioner to the U.K.

Many years ago, a soulful and sagacious thought embarked on a pilgrimage. Veerayatan is the embodied expression of that thought. Veerayatan's Silver Jubilee is a sacred milestone on that path of pilgrimage. It is a shining beacon of light, a glorious example, and an inspiring chapter in the book of altruism, compassion, dedication, social service and human goodness.

Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj was a saint of towering stature. The luminous pathfinder and the incandescent energy behind Veerayatan, he represented a new phase of Jain resurgence and renaissance in the twentieth century. Veerayatan was blessed by his presence and is enlivened by his living legacy. He gave a new direction to Jain society and a vitality to the understanding and exposition of Jain philosophy. Nurtured by his transcendental vision, and under the leadership of Acharya Shri Chandana Shriji, Veerayatan has bloomed and blossomed.

Veerayatan is at once a vision, an institution and a mission. It is a consecrated endeavour. Its humanitarian mission is rooted in the philosophy of *satya* and *ahimsa*.

Lord Mahavir said that trust permeates the world. That is why compassion is an aspect of truth. Veerayatan is an institution that reflects *ahimsa* in action. It is at once an ideal as well as a reality, a journey and a holy

destination. It is a steady light, a joyous lamp of sacrifice, penance, service, dedication and determination shining in the auspicious land of Rajgir where Tirthankar Mahavir spent fourteen of his *chaturmas*.

The great saint and preceptor, Gurudev Shri Amar Muniji trod the grounds ofVeerayatan and imparted to it the sanctity of an ashram. It is the homage of an illustrious disciple to her great mentor and guru.

Veerayatan is a dream come true. It is the fulfilment of the noble vision of Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj, the great sage of the Vaibhargiri Hills, and the saint of the Saptparni cave. He was compassion incarnate. Veerayatan is the precious gem of compassion in the treasure-trove of Jain institutions.

It strikes the right balance between *pravrutti* (activity) and *nivrutti* (abstinence). It has the resonance of Swami Vivekanand's exhortation : "Arise, awake and do not stop until you reach your goal." As Acharya Shri Chandana Shriji says: "Awake, arise, and make an effort here and now." Veerayatan highlights the holistic continuity of the spirit of cosmic oneness and universal compassion which are the hallmarks of Indian culture.

This souvenir issue is a loving tribute to Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji and Acharya Shri Chandana Shriji - one a venerable teacher and torch-bearer and the other a dedicated pupil and path-builder in a time-honoured tradition. On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee, the souvenir reverberates with the clarion call of Jain history and philosophy, beckoning to the future with Veerayatan's message of humanitarian service and universal welfare in the twenty-first century.

The four sections of this book are the four aspects of an invocation from Jain history and philosophy, its paths and pathfinders, its visionaries and their voices.

In the first section Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji has conducted a multidimensional survey, and a comprehensive analysis, of the ancient past.

She reflects on the endless possibilities for the Jain tradition in the future. In doing so, she uses Time in its *trikalvarti* existence as her 'medium'. In her brilliant and stirring words, she has summoned up our suppressed 'present' in the battle for the liberation of the individual and of society from the agonies of this world and the next, and has invited one and all to join the Jain renaissance.

The inspiring image of Veerayatan clearly shines through the teachings of Shri Amar Muniji in the second section and through the glowing tribute by Sadhvi Shri Sadhnaji in the third section. These writings illumine the pathways of reflection and guide us to action in response to our human and social obligations.

The vast and fathomless ocean of current and ancient Jain tradition has been extensively and scientifically filtered to encapsulate the quintessence of truth in the fourth section. By giving us the mantra: *uṭṭhiē nō pamāyaē* – 'Arise, awake, and neglect not your duty. Make an effort here and now', and by calling upon everyone to respond, Acharya Shri Chandana Shriji, eloquently articulates the imperative need for enlightened action. She offers selfless action at the feet of tradition by blowing the conch shell of sincerity and submission. She makes her own spiritual experience the touchstone for defining Jainism and humanitarianism by using logic, careful discernment and the sacred scriptural words of the Realised Ones. This outcome of her constant contemplation is echoed in the *Ashtapadi* of the *Sthanang-Sutra*, and she makes a determined effort to engrave this philosophy on the psyche of contemporary Jain society through teaching the section called 'discipline', in the '*utthan-pada*', not merely by sermonising but by providing a practical and shining example of these precepts for one and all.

In the Geetopanishad, Lord Krishna reassures the world and proclaims: "Whenever dharma is neglected on the earth, I shall return in every age and destroy the evil and evil-doers, and establish dharma." The meaning and the message of

that assurance is that the divine consciousness in human beings must assert itself in the face of evil and suffering. Today, our once pious land is threatened by abject poverty, rampant disease, mass illiteracy, loss of civility and an onset of insensitivity, corruption and moral degradation. Can we then neglect or disregard the call of the *Abhyutthan-pada*? Can we ignore the voice of our own conscience? The answer has to be an emphatic "no"! Veerayatan offers a solution that wells up from the heart of ancient Indian tradition.

The lessons of the *'utthan-pada'* being taught by Acharya Shri Chandana Shriji are simple, universal and practical. They are not only the cream of the traditional teachings, but also the precepts for facing new challenges on new frontiers.

Briefly, the lessons of the *'utthan-pada'* are:

1. Listen to the most splendid voice of *dharma*.
2. Practise the best of *dharma*.
3. Intercept the influx of *papa-karma* by observing maximum abstinence.
4. Prepare to dissolve the existing karmic bonds by the unselfish practice of *tapa*.
5. Provide shelter and support for the helpless and the homeless.
6. Actively give education to those who lack it or are deprived of it.
7. Always be ready and willing to serve the sick.
8. Settle disputes, differences of opinion and disruption with mutual understanding and kind feelings towards each other.

These teachings of the *Ashtapadi* of the *Sthanang-Sutra* are the true highway to attaining liberation through the spiritually motivated actions of this earthly life; they are uplifting, universally understood and are also the common pathways on which many people, in the social fabric of their lives, find true happiness and well-being. This is the way of selfless action. The joy obtained from giving, and the consistency maintained between the relinquishment of possessions and the enjoyment of one's non-possession is the reward of that righteous path. Along it we will find the source of energy that enables us to make acquisitions and keep them secure by giving selflessly and acting

in detachment, a beautiful combination of activity, non-attachment and abstinence leading to a balanced way of life.

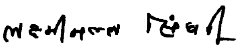
In the *Uttaradhyayan-Sutra*, the teachings of the '*utthan-pada*', about selfless actions resulting from the rightful insight, are encapsulated thus:

kiriyaṃ ca rōyaē dhīrē akiriyaṃ parivajjaē
diṭṭhiē diṭṭhisampannē dhammaṃ cara suduccaraṃ

The Sutra says that brave and noble men should give up their inaction and become involved in taking action. Having thus been equipped with the rightful insight, they should then walk the difficult path of true religion with total faith. Mahavir has also expressed this philosophy in the most beautiful way, saying, '*Tapa* is the flame, the soul is the altar, deeds are the fuel and abstinence the prayer for peace. With the fire thus kindled, I perform my *homa*, this is all I need for my oblations. Sages have always glorified such auspicious *homa*.'

Veerayatan, run by Acharya Shri Chandanaji, her disciples and supporters, has all the makings of a similarly propitious *homa*. No words would be adequate in praise of such an endeavour. This souvenir is the meaningful and natural melody of that great *homa* and its sweet sounding mantra.

I am glad that the number of supporters and admirers of Veerayatan, and of those influenced and impressed by Acharya Shri Chandana Shriji's personality, is constantly growing in India, Great Britain and other foreign countries. I believe that the path chosen for Veerayatan's growth is the way forward. I share Veeryatan's vision and values of humanitarian service as an expression of proactive non-violence and as a pathway to the pilgrimage of universal peace and well being. I am honoured to have been invited to write the foreword to this soulful and uplifting book.



Dr. L. M Singhvi

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Shilapiji for Prof [illegible] Jain 3/6/05 Delhi

The essence of creation is inherent in the act of cessation. Every new creation seeks the dissolution of its predecessor. Think deeply about the fact that as long as a seed has an individual existence, we cannot even begin to think of a tree existing. As soon as the seed stops being a seed, and totally relinquishes its identity, then only can the tree begin to exist as a new entity. So the dismissal of one opens the door to the creation of the other. Do not fear this cessation. It is just the process of preparation for the creation of something new, so welcome it. We need to accept this aspect of creation. To establish the existence of self on a permanent basis, that self will have to be given up totally at least once. You have to have patience if you wish to see the seed turn into a plant. The vigil may be a long one but do not be disheartened. After this process of dispersal, creation is inevitable. They are two sides of the same coin.

"Those good deeds that you get [illegible] or you inspire others to do, those deeds you approve of and know are good, do them yourself! Some ignorant people say: "Brother! This man is ill, please help him; it would be a good deed. We won't do it ourselves, but you do it." I wonder what sort of religion or philosophy this is, and am both amused and saddened by it. If it is a good deed, a deed worth doing, an act of compassion, then how could performing this deed hamper their religion? If you are permitted to motivate others to perform good deeds and then approve these deeds yourself, why then should your doing it be questioned? Good deeds are always worth doing, whether they are done by a sadhu or a layman."


Jainism

In the Rig-Veda, it is written: *kālō ha sarvasyēśvaraḥ* - 'Time is the Lord of the universe. Time alone determines everything; it is the universal executor and legislator'. Tirthankar Mahavir said: *vattaṇā lakkhaṇō kālō* – 'the characteristic of Time is that it makes things change. It determines and regulates a system in the universe.' Time is instrumental in making new things old and old things new. In the words of Tirthankar Mahavir, 'He who grasps the present moment in its entirety acquires a knowledge of the endless past and the infinite future as well.' Time is that which knows all that is, all that was, and all that will be; Time has a *trikalvarti* existence.

One of the oldest religions of the world, Jainism, accords Time an honoured, sovereign, irreducible and metaphysical status. Like Time, Jainism too has no beginning and no end; it is limitless in its scope. Just as every moment of Time is connected to every other, so too is Jainism logical and coherent. It seems as if Time and Jainism exist on a parallel. Although Jainism is a proud symbol of human civilisation and has a fascinating past, not much is known about it. Since Time witnesses everything that happens in this universe, let us look at the glorious past of Jainism through the eyes of Time.

That splendid past, each moment of which is replete with simple austerity, the purity of the inner self, and ablaze with the light of compassion for all. Every aspect of the chronicles of Jainism is embellished with the *swastikas* (auspicious symbols) of service, devotion and spiritual enlightenment, but along with these propitious symbols, some inauspicious signs of division and disharmony can be found as well. Nevertheless, it is our past that keeps our present alive and gives us inspiration for the future.

Veerayatan, having embraced that imposing past, is no mere institution; it's a living breathing form of an undying commitment to working for people's welfare, a reverberating echo of the magnificent achievements of Jainism. The hallowed ground of this place of spiritual development is consecrated by the practical task of reconstructing the world through welfare work, thus demonstrating the quintessential application of timeless truths in the principles of Jainism.

Dedicated as it is to *samast-lok-kalayan*, an all-embracing concept of human welfare, Veerayatan is a true emblem of Jainism. On the auspicious occasion of its Silver Jubilee, some glimpses of Jainism's splendid past, forming the basis for a new direction, are presented here. It is important, therefore, to absorb those practices that will bring about this new direction, and let go of those elements which may hinder growth and expansion.

So, let us put the history of the Jains in proper perspective by viewing it from afar. Let's imagine Time, that impartial and unimpeachable witness of all events, stepping forward to uncover Jainism's glorious past.

I am Time. I have neither beginning nor end; nature has set no limits for me and my fathomless depths can only be plumbed by the *Kevalis* (omniscient). I am what has passed, I am what is now, I am what will come to be. You, wise readers, are aware that nothing big or small can escape my scrutiny or remain untouched by the changes I bring. Today Veerayatan, one of the greatest achievements of Jainism, is celebrating its Silver Jubilee, and as this special occasion is history in the making, I am pleased to say I find myself feeling very 'auspicious' indeed. To mark this great event, I would like to take the opportunity of selecting some choice gems of Jain history from my treasure chest of memories and, in appreciation of the real soul of Jainism, present them for your delectation.

I am aware that there is still some debate in Jain philosophical circles about my existence at all. The great thinker Acharya Umasvati, in his timeless work '*Tattvartha Sutra*', has used the phrase *kālaścētyēkē* [1] – 'According to some, Time is also a substance' – to explore the various beliefs and tenets regarding my being. Only the Tirthankars (ford-makers; the omniscient spiritual teachers of the Jains), able to see the past, present and future, can tell you whether I am one of the six substances, and the catalyst for change in the form of things, or whether indeed I am an inevitable part of existence. All I know is that everyone appreciates and experiences me on a practical level. As the 'universal archivist', I have an intimate knowledge of Jain history and am the only true witness of the course of its events as they occur in my endless *avsarpini* (regressive) and *utsarpini* (progressive) cycles.

[1] *Tattvartha Sutra* Acharya Umasvati, 5.38

Although I am known for my impartiality, Jainism does occupy a special place in my heart because I have witnessed its beginning, seen its inner beauty and watched the unflinching resolve of its followers to make this world a better place. I, who am limitless, know that Jainism is the immortal truth. In my opinion only the promoters and teachers of Jainism and Buddhism, of all the religions of the world, have attempted to raise their disciples and adherents to a level equal to their own. This glory of Jainism that I am describing to you is not only a song of praise to the revered Tirthankars, but also the sweet melody composed of the inspirational deeds of their shining disciples, and it extemporises on the theme of how they worked hard to beautify the earth, enrich culture and seek higher knowledge. So come with me and see things through my eyes. Let me take you into those ancient caves of my special remembrance, caves that are still echoing to the mammoth task carried out by the Tirthankars and their faithful followers in trying to enlighten the world in my present *avsarpini* cycle.

Jainism is a Separate and Sovereign Religion

Though history has not yet revealed this truth, it is a fact that the religion that gave impetus to the culture of compassion, catalysed human civilisation, and showed the way of ultimate development, has remained largely unrecognised and unsung - even on its native soil. Since the name of Jainism has not been entered on the honour-roll of world religions, and not many memorials or traces of it have been found to support its ancient origin, the vast majority of historians and scholars have been denying the logical and separate existence of Jainism. In the absence of enough literary and archaeological proof, many assumptions about its philosophy and growth have been made and several misconceptions about its beginnings have arisen. Even Pandit Jawaharalal Nehru, a well-known scholar, in his famous book *Hindustan Ki Kahani* (The Story of India), categorised Jainism as a branch of the Vedic religion[2]. As a result, Jainism's status as an independent religion has been called into question and its achievements have been

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hidden under those of other religions. Why this has happened, or who is responsible for it, is a matter for further research and introspection. I have already seen everything, and I know that there never has been as beautiful an expression of the urge to protect nature or nurture empathy as there is in Jainism. Its separate existence is obvious because it has a unique and scientifically based philosophy, it provides an inspirational spiritual path and is complete in itself.

I am free from all limitations; I see the world as a whole. Scholars may consider this as a boast, or a challenge on my part, but the truth is that there have been many epoch-making personalities in the history of India whose stories are inscribed on my heart, but whose deeds have not yet had the chroniclers at hand to bring them to the light of day. The flame of compassion and truth nurtured by the great Jain savants has been brought to the attention of the world by foreign scholars like Germany's Walter Schubring and Herman Jacobi. The latter cited scholarly arguments on the basis of his research and study that showed Jainism as a completely separate religion, independent of both Buddhism and the Vedic religion, and proved that it existed in India well before the last Tirthankar of this *avsarpini* cycle.

When I see findings of this nature I am delighted because I am reminded of the past unfolding in an unending pattern of events which history can never see. Humanity tends to believe only in things that are written down, and historians have confirmed the existence of only four of Jainism's twenty four Tirthankars in my present *avsarpini* cycle. They are Rishabhdev, Arishtanemi, Parshvanath and Mahavir. I feel that their research is incomplete as I am witness to both recorded and unrecorded history. However, mindful of the conventions of this sceptical age, and confining myself only to what has been incontrovertibly established by historians, I will begin with the first Tirthankar, Bhagvan Rishabhdev, who shines radiantly in my memory.

Rishabhdev: An Epoch-Maker

From a chronological point of view, the epoch hallowed by the birth of Tirthankar Rishabhdev was the one in which the culture of *Kalpa-Vriksha* (wish-granting tree) was coming to an end and people no longer found it easy to gather even the basic means of existence.



Rishabhdev taught civilisation and culture

Culture and education as we know it now had not even begun. People lacked guidance and were unsure about how to obtain the necessities of life. At this stage, Rishabhdev took a leading role in solving these problems by teaching them about *asi* (the art of the sword), *masi* (the art of writing) and *krishi* (the art of agriculture).

It pains me to say that if these questions of survival, culture and education had been faced by some present-day Jains, they would have condemned the solution out of hand. Agriculture, sculpture, industry, writing and other art-forms, they would say, involve violence and are therefore conducive to prolonging the cycle of birth and death. They believe that the sole preoccupation of this precious human life, which has been obtained as a result of many good deeds, should be the attainment of salvation and of salvation alone.

But Rishabhdev was not the sort of religious teacher preoccupied only with the next world; he could relate to ordinary everyday practicalities and follow the needs of the age. He was a visionary, a great thinker, and a truly compassionate being. He did not say, "Why should I involve myself in such mundane matters? My connection with society ends with the collection of alms. The only goal, after renunciation, should be that of liberation."

Instead, he was a leader of the people. He taught them how to generate resources by their own efforts, as well as how to enjoy and share those resources with each other. He considered the demands of the age paramount, and teaching the people how to work collaboratively for the common good helped raise humanity to a new and higher condition. In following these ideals Tirthankar Rishabhdev was not alone; all the Tirthankars have followed this twofold path of concentrating on self-development and on the welfare of others. Each of the Tirthankars during his own epoch kept society thriving with his unique vision.

Compassion Incarnate - Arishtanemi

All the Tirthankars were great promoters of the spiritual path of development and marvellous teachers in the art of living. They were concerned with the problems of this world, while ceaselessly pointing the way to liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Whether opposing gory and futile self-mutilation in the name of religion, like Tirthankar Parshvanath, or attacking injustices and exploitation, like Tirthankar Mahavir, all the Tirthankars attempted to combat social evils. I am left breathless with admiration at the compassion that flowed from the heart of the twenty second Tirthankar, Arishtanemi, in his ceaseless efforts to save the lives of even the humblest living creature. Tirthankar Mahavir too was steadfast in trying to eradicate caste restrictions, inter-caste animosity, lack of respect for women, animal sacrifice and the exploitation of the lower classes. His continuous and remarkable efforts towards these good causes have left me feeling deeply grateful.

Without compassion we live not in a cosmos but in chaos. Compassion began to mean something entirely new to me when I remembered how Arishtanemi heard, over the mellifluous sounds of the *shahanai* (an Indian wind instrument), the cries of beasts being led to the slaughter for his own wedding feast. Here was a virile young bridegroom, decked out in all his finery, on his way to contracting a great dynastic marriage. Yet he was swayed from his course by nothing more than the feeble bleats of a

few unfortunate creatures. Overcome with compassion, he chose to give up the world and opted instead to devote his life to the path of spiritual perfection.

The holy lives and good works of all the Tirthankars make me realise how earth has been hallowed by the birth of a great religion whose prophets were full of compassion for human life, and for all the components of nature - earth, sky, water, plant-life, birds and beasts. The lives of the Tirthankars show how it is possible to live in oneness with all beings.

The Integration of *Pravrutti* and *Nivrutti* on the Spiritual Path

The Tirthankars demonstrated the integration of *pravrutti* (activity) and *nivrutti* (abstinence) as an ideal spiritual path through the example of their own lives. This twofold path embodied by the Tirthankars - of striving for one's own purification and at the same time of helping others - was followed assiduously by their disciples. As a result, the development and growth of every aspect of life became a unique feature of the Jain religion. I have seen the unforgettable contribution of Jain followers to art, culture, medicine, education, charity, social service and many other fields. Even today I look back at that golden age when Jain society was greatly involved in good causes like providing food, education, health-care, security, and freedom from fear for everyone including the birds and the beasts. At that time this religion was a source of inspiration to many princes, generals and other notable personalities. Many of them adopted it as their way of life and entire kingdoms embraced Jainism as their state religion. It was not seen just as an abstract philosophical system; it was popular as a religion of the masses too. However, I am sorry to say that Jainism's progress slowly lost its momentum until finally the trend was reversed.

When I come down from that vision of the glorious past and watch the present day activities of Jain society, I see that some people preach only the one-sided view, that of *nivrutti* - abstaining from worldly action. They believe that the sole objective of life is to liberate oneself, and they seem to be

indifferent to doing good deeds for others. They tend to think that the latter is an obstacle to gaining liberation. 'If *ashubh-karma* (negative karma) represents fetters of iron, then *shubh-karma* (positive karma) means fetters of gold. From the viewpoint of ultimate liberation, both create karmic bondage, and should be avoided.' Such statements really bother me as they hinder the growth and development of Jainism. Certain people began to believe that the world was a vale of tears, that life was nasty, brutish and short. As a result there was a great turning away from duty to this world, blinding people to the true message of the Tirthankars. Jainism has always worked to make life better for everyone. Jainism began to wane as a universal religion when the transient nature of life was emphasised, and its followers began to think that it was not conducive to liberation to beautify the world or work for the welfare of others.

The Bright Lights of Jainism

I do not understand how such ideas ever came to be associated with Jainism. It has always worn a crown of *anekant* (doctrine of the multiple facets of reality); it always respects a multidimensional view of the truth. Its pristine source is the Gangotri glacier of universal welfare. I have been trying to fathom out how Jainism became side-tracked in this way, how it wandered from its simple and beautiful path of universal welfare. How did some of its followers become so narrow in their views? Instead of thinking about their responsibilities towards the betterment of the world, when did they start thinking that because life is only momentary, they should preoccupy themselves solely with the liberation of self. So, from being like an all-pervasive warmth, the world-wide appeal of Jainism has been clouded over by limited thoughts and ideas. The religion which could have spanned the world has shrunk to being a faith for a handful of six or seven million people within its own native country. The great Jain historian, Dr. Hiralal Jain, writes that the number of Jains falls by approximately 100,000 every decade[1]. If this trend continues, I wonder what the fate of Jainism will be in the next century. Normally I wouldn't be concerned about

[1] *Jain Itihas Ki Purva Pithika Aur Hamara Abhyuthan*, Dr Hiralal Jain, p 2

these matters because, after all, I am Time and a neutral entity, but the dimming of the light of Jainism makes me sad. I hope people will take notice of me and ask me why I am so downhearted. Then I will be able to say that if the followers of the Jain religion had continued doing the great deeds of their forbearers, then Jainism would have taken its rightful place among the great religions of the world.

When I see that more than ever before the world needs Jain principles like *ahimsa* (non-violence), *anekant*, and *aparigrah* (non-possession), I really wish there was another Emperor Kharvel, or shining lights like Emperor Samprati, Acharya Hemchandra, a latter-day Kundakund, Umasvati, Bhamashah or Tejpal to integrate the scattered elements of Jainism, revive its energy and thus benefit all mankind. If the great wisdom, determination and devotion of these epoch-making Jains were transmitted to Jain society today, the golden age of Jainism would again reverberate throughout the world! You may be curious about who these epoch-makers were that I so delight in praising them. I am filled with joy when I think of these great luminaries who not only raised Jainism to heights of glory but also illuminated Indian culture and philosophy.

Emperor Samprati's Valuable Contribution

I have often wondered, having witnessed the origins, growth and establishment of the two contemporary religions Jainism and Buddhism, why the latter achieved greater success in becoming a world religion. Historians agree that the Emperor Ashoka, a devout Buddhist of 3rd century BC, played a prime role in securing Buddhism's ascendancy. Today he is universally known as Ashoka the Great and his renunciation of aggression is world-renowned. It is natural that the devotees of the religion which has became so famous should themselves become famous, but in the chronicles of Jainism the deeds of Emperor Samprati rank alongside those of Ashoka the Great. But whereas Ashoka's insignia has been adopted by the Indian Government as its national emblem, who has even heard of this great

Jain Emperor Samprati? Why aren't his achievements celebrated in the same measure?

In order to spread the message of non-violence, Samprati sent his retainers to many non-Aryan countries (approx. 2nd century BC). Acharya Suhasti was Samprati's guru. He agreed to send some of his disciples to these places at the behest of the Emperor. Samprati supported them in this courageous mission. Jain historian Munishri Kanti Sagarji tells us that this Mauryan Emperor Samprati's sons and daughters had led a very protected life until that time, but he sent them to distant countries as well, dressed as Jain sadhus and sadhvis[1]. Vincent Smith tells us that Samprati established Jainism in what are now Islamic countries like Iran and other Arab countries[2]. For Samprati, ahimsa was not just a philosophical concept, he lived by it in everything he did and the people throughout his empire followed his example.

According to available evidence the great deeds of Emperor Samprati include the building of 125,000 new Jain temples, the restoring of 13,000 ruined temples and the setting up of 700 charitable homes[3]. It is sometimes said that Samprati constructed so many temples in both Aryan and non-Aryan regions that India came to be known as 'The Land of Temples'!

In fact, the exploits of both Ashoka and Samprati took Indian culture to great heights, and through their efforts the spiritual science of India spread over rivers, deserts and mountains to distant countries. But historians have only ever sung the praises of Ashoka; everywhere one looks there are many accolades given to Emperor Ashoka but very few to Emperor Samprati. I am surprised at the neglect of Samprati; I am disappointed to find that historians have only now revealed that some of the famous rock inscriptions ascribed to Ashoka were actually the work of Samprati.

These rock 'edicts' constantly reiterate the importance of ahimsa, avoiding hurt to animals and birds, and the protection of all beings - teachings that are not as prominent

[1] *Pramukh Aitihasik Jain Purush Aur Mahilayen*, Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain, p 50
Ibid, p 50

in Buddhism as they are in Jainism. This suggests that either Ashoka was a Jain before he became a Buddhist, or that Samprati's rock edicts have been wrongly ascribed to Ashoka. Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain considers those pillars and rock edicts inscribed *devanampiyassa, piyadassinlaja* -'the king who is beloved of the gods and beloved of the eyes'- to have been set up not by Ashoka, but by Samprati . The reason for this is that the term *devanampiyassa, piyadassinlaja* was used for Samprati, and *devanampriya* - 'beloved of the gods'- was a characteristic epithet used for Ashoka. It should also be noted that even the term *devanampriya* belongs to the Jain tradition, and was possibly used for describing Ashoka.

Kharvel – A Great Leader of Cultural Consciousness

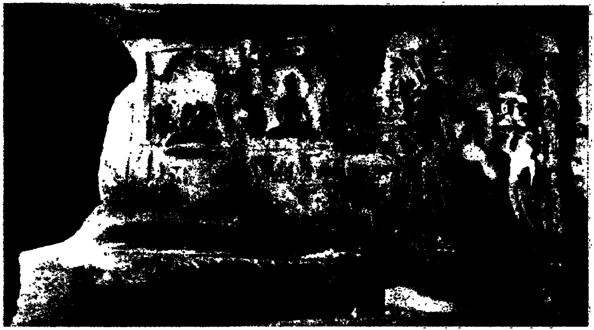
My gaze now turns to another bright star shining in the Jain firmament like Emperor Samprati, the Emperor of Kaling, Kharvel (2nd century BC). Though his devotion to Jainism defeats my feeble powers of expression, I am glad to accept the challenge of trying to describe some of what he did.

If the history of India today is fascinating to world scholars, and the country itself a vibrant centre for research, Kharvel's rock inscriptions are undoubtedly one of the important reasons. Many rock inscriptions have been uncovered to date, but the information that Kharvel's edicts contain is unparalleled. Their beauty is unsurpassed. These are the only rock inscriptions which give important and detailed information about the social, political and economic conditions in Kaling during that period, and about the lineage of its founder. It is here that we find the first use of the name *Bharatvarsh* for the subcontinent. These edicts also give us considerable facts about the life of the local people of Kaling as well as a deep insight into how seriously the kings took their duties to their subjects. Emperor Kharvel had these rock edicts inscribed in the district of Puri in the present state of Orissa. Three miles away from the capital Bhuvaneshvar there is a mountain range called Khandgiri. One of the northern summits is called Udayagiri and situated on this mountain is the ancient and massive Hathigumpha temple. Kharvel

Pramukh Aitihasik Jain Purush Aur Mahilayen Dr Jyoti Prasad Jain, p 51



A scene depicting the performing of puja- an engraving at Mt. Udayagiri



Relief showing Tirthankars carved on the wall of a cave on Udayagiri

had the roof and upper part of the front wall of this temple covered with inscriptions in *Ardhamagadhi* and *Apabhramsh* (the Jain dialect of Prakrit). The inscriptions are in 17 lines and cover an area of 84 square feet and are written in Brahmi script. These rock inscriptions are embellished with many auspicious Jain symbols like the *swastika*, the *nandavartta* and the *ashoka-vriksha*, and begin with the devotional prayers to the *Arhats* (omniscients) and the *Siddhas* (liberated souls)*.

I want to bring to the notice of chroniclers that Emperor Kharvel was descended from the great line of Maharaja Chetak, the leader of the Vaishali Republic. The name Kharvel occurs in the royal annals of Chetak's son Shobhanrai. It is due to Kharvel's influence that Jainism became the national religion of Kaling and maintained its position as such for centuries. Along with building new Jain temples, and restoring the old ones, Kharvel pursued a policy of according equal treatment to all religions, which singled him out as an enlightened ruler.

When I contemplate the splendour of Kharvel's achievements, I wonder how this man, who had taken the twelve vows of a *shravak* (layman), focused such concentration on his spiritual purification and performed his duties as a king so magnificently, could still manage to inspire and organise the making of such incomparable rock inscriptions and other artefacts, which are still intact and have come down to us through the ages in their timeless forms. I think it was his love for the teachings of Jainism that enabled him to envisage and create the extraordinary in his life. And by so doing he contributed greatly to the flowering of Indian culture.

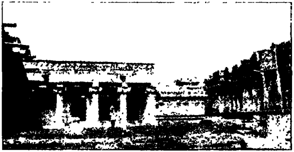
Ahimsa is the life-breath of Jainism - its heart and soul. It is the backbone of the entire body of the religion. It would not be an exaggeration if I said that Jainism was born out of ahimsa - non-violence towards all living things. But sometimes the sentiments of non-violence and compassion are mistaken for cowardice. Many historians have blamed the Jains for India's enslavement and 'downfall', saying that it is

* *Pramukh Aitihasik Jain Purush Aur Mahilayen*, Dr Jyoti Prasad Jain, p 51

a religion which saps the martial virtues, enfeebles its followers, and leaves them incapable of self-defence. This is far from being the case. I know of no Jain king, minister or general who refused to fight for his country. On the contrary, Jain Emperors like Chandragupta (4th century BC), and Vikramaditya (1st century BC) contributed to protecting India from the fiercest of foreign invaders". When Demetrius attacked Magadh, Emperor Kharvel led his forces into battle and routed the Greek.

Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta was a Jain

The last decade of 4th century BC saw the dawning of the golden age of Indian politics with the accession of that paragon of virtue, Chandragupta Maurya. After much debate, historians now agree that he was a Jain [10]. There is ample proof of this. The great historian, Sir Vincent Smith, in the third volume of his work, *The Ancient History of India*, has written, 'By studying the rock edicts at Shravan Belgola, I am now disposed to believe that the tradition probably is true in its main outlines and that



Temples at Shravanbelgola

Chandragupta really did abdicate and became a Jain ascetic, under the guidance of Acharya Bhadrabahu.[11] It is a historical truth that Chandragupta's reign saw a great expansion, unification and consolidation of political power in the country. It is said that a virtuous and devout king helps spread the religion he espouses. As Chandragupta expanded his empire, so Jainism expanded. He established more and more rock inscriptions, Jain temples, dwelling places and caves for Jain sadhus and sadhvis.

My records would be incomplete if I did not mention the prominent role of virtuous Jain acharyas in inspiring Jain emperors to perform great deeds and work tirelessly for

Pramukh Aitihasik Jain Purush Aur Mahilayen, Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain, p.62
Jain Itihas Ki Purva Pithika Aur Hamara Abhyuthan Dr. Hiralal Jain, p.76
V Smith, I. H. I. p.146, *Jain Itihas Ki Purva Pithika Aur Hamara Abhyuthan*, Dr. Hiralal Jain, p.77

the common good. I am greatly impressed by the system of *sangh* (religious community) in the Jain religion - a religious order that consists of lay people and those who have renounced the world. In no other religion can one find such a strong bond amongst the members of the *sangh*. It demonstrates their far-sightedness in developing a means for taking care of the community as a whole.

In my experience the most important characteristic in the system of the Jain *sangh* is the symbiotic relationship between the renounced class *(shramans)* and the lay people *(shravaks)*. It is one of the main reasons for the flourishing of Jainism. As a result of this harmonious relationship amongst the members of the *sangh*, in the first few centuries after Mahavir's nirvana, there were millions of Jains throughout India from north to south and east to west. In this process of expansion, the *shramans* had a leading role and their orders were respected and carried out by lay people. I am impressed by the extraordinary capabilities of the Jain kings and I am equally moved by the wisdom of the Jain acharyas. The status of the *sangh* is so important in the Jain religion that even the Tirthankars, before they began a sermon, would say: *Namo Tithassa* – 'I bow to the *tirth (sangh)*'.



A Jain shraman teaching the shravaks

Acharya Suhasti – A Legendary Personality

There are many fascinating stories about the collective efforts of both the renounced classes and the lay people. I have told you about some of the achievements of Emperor Samprati and I remember that it was the farsightedness of Acharya Suhasti that first

inspired him. The Acharya was a pillar of strength to Samprati, who, working under his guidance, made his name in the annals of history. Suhasti was a great seer who recognised the needs of the age and brought about changes in the code of conduct regulating the manner in which sadhus and sadhvis seek alms. This became necessary when a great famine occurred and the sadhus were not able to gather food in the prescribed manner. He was the first person to take up the matter and find an appropriate method of making changes. He had a difference of opinion on this highly inflammatory matter when he discussed it with his senior monastic brother Acharya Mahagiri, but Suhasti never wavered from his customary courtesy, affection and understanding. Suhasti was a visionary acharya, who helped propel forward the chariot of revolution in the Jain religion.

Maurya Emperor Chandragupta became so immersed in the precepts of Jainism that he ultimately gave up the throne to become a Jain sadhu. The person who inspired him to do so was Acharya Bhadrabahu, the last *shrutkevali* of the present age.

According to the Digambar tradition, the person who spread the word of Jainism in South India was Acharya Bhadrabahu. In 3rd century BC there was a twelve year long famine in the north. The Digambars believe that at this juncture, Acharya Bhadrabahu travelled to South India with 12,000 *munis* (ascetics), which resulted in the establishment of the Jain religion there. The Shvetambars, on the other hand, say that he was in the mountains of Nepal performing *Mahapran dhyan sadhna*. The Shvetambars believe that the increase of Jainism in the south was inspired by Bhadrabahu II, who lived three centuries after Tirthankar Mahavir's nirvana. The last *shrutkevali*, Acharya Bhadrabahu, achieved nirvana 170 years after Tirthankar Mahavir, hence he could not be the Bhadrabahu mentioned by the Digambars.

Why this Illiberality?

I do not want to get bogged down in the minutiae of scholarly controversy. I have the greatest respect for the individual and his

right to his own opinion and I am not biased towards one or the other point of view. I feel it is this sectarian prejudice, resulting in the development of separate beliefs and observances, that has proved a great obstacle on the evolutionary path of Jain thought. Jainism was developing into a single strong skein of silk until these varied interpretations began to split it into many strands. In my view such divisions in Jainism, whether arising out of the past, or existing in the present, are totally insignificant. Both the Digambar and Shvetambar schools are equally worthy of my praise, or where appropriate, my constructive criticism, because both are equally devoted to Tirthankar Mahavir. However, the situation today grieves me because the Digambars and Shvetambars, forgetting their common ground, are flexing their muscles and squaring up to each other like members of opposing forces, rather than devotees of the same religion.

Standing on the threshold of the twenty first century, I see other religions presenting their philosophical beliefs and ritual practices in a scientific and logical way, whereas some followers of Jainism, because of this sectarian rivalry, are arguing amongst themselves trying to prove who is the better Jain. This results in an open and unhealthy confrontation, with each side attempting to take control of the holy places associated with the Tirthankars, as has happened at Sammet Shikharji, the place of nirvana for twenty Tirthankars. The tension which has arisen between the Digambars and the Shvetambars on the issue of Sammet Shikharji is saddening. Is this not a mockery of Tirthankar Mahavir's multidimensional religion of non-violence, compassion and friendship? Is it not a desecration of the holy ground where the Tirthankars preached? I feel that some of the followers have completely forgotten the glorious past and the real meaning of Jainism. Competition and conflict are a waste of energy and nothing less than blows aimed at the heart of Jainism itself.

The Splendour of Jainism in South India

Let me tell you something about the spread of the religion of ahimsa and compassion by those people so worthy of my veneration, the Jain acharyas. Come, take a look at all those years that have gone by. It is more than two thousand years ago; Buddhism and Brahminism were at their peak. There was great animosity between the Aryan and non-Aryan races. There were hardly any amenities for travelling. Despite these obstacles and all sorts of other challenges, the Jain *shramans* ignored all the external differences of caste and creed and spread the message of Mahavir in Aryan and non-Aryan states alike. They journeyed to South India, the centre of the Dravidian community, and established Jain monasteries there.

With tremendous hard work and dedication they learned the difficult local dialects of Tamil, Kannad and other languages so that they could use them to write up the Jain texts. They opened schools, orphanages, dispensaries and other institutions dedicated to the people's welfare. They developed cordial relationships with royal families in the area and earned their respect and devotion. Many kings, noblemen, generals, ministers and other notables became Jains and renounced the world. The main dynasties of the South - the Gangas, Rashtrakutas, Kadambas, Pallavas, Cholas, Chandras, Hoyasalas, Chalukyas and Pandyas - expressed their keen interest in the teachings of Mahavir. While the kings of North and West India in general merely respected Jainism, the kings of South India not only embraced it as their religion, but also made its propagation the cornerstone of their reign.

Jains in the latter part of 1st century AD could be compared to present-day Christian missionaries. They exhibited the same tireless patience, burning zeal, ingenuity and fortitude. For them, devotion and propagation were two sides of the same coin. The natural companion of their day was the thought that everyone should be touched by the compassion of Mahavir. Whichever country they journeyed to they

learned the local language, culture and customs with a view to making their message more accessible and easy to adopt. Professor Frazer has written that it was entirely thanks to the Jains that a cultural revolution occurred in South India and that new ideals, new literature and new modes of behaviour came into being[12].

The Jains did not remain tied to one place, one class or one community. 'Friendship to all' is emblazoned on the 'forehead' of Jainism. And it is the vitality of this message that enabled the Jains to cross any boundary. They ventured far and wide, reaching Yunan Province, Russia, Norway, Iran, Arabia, Afghanistan, Java and Sumatra. Theirs was a missionary spirit tempered in the flame of austerity and they were extremely successful at spreading the tenets of Jainism.

History bears witness to the fact that the blaze of 'missionary fervour' Jainism once possessed is now much abated. Far from taking the word to distant countries, Jain families themselves seem to show little enthusiasm for learning about their own religion. Jain sadhus and sadhvis are restricted in their means of travel, so this has been used as an excuse to prevent them taking the inspirational message of Tirthankar Mahavir to other countries. Sometimes following a set code of conduct in such a rigid way can become a hindrance to the dissemination of the great message. I am compelled to think that if Jain followers in the past had allowed themselves to be hemmed in by such narrow ideas and beliefs, Jain history would have ended before it properly began.

These people who dedicated their lives to teaching Tirthankar Mahavir's precepts to an expanding following, not only observed the tenets of his inspirational message, but also steeped themselves in his way of life – a life given over to an empathy for all beings. They walked the same path of good thoughts and good deeds as had Mahavir. With the objective of *savva jaga-jiva-rakkhaṇa dayaṭṭhayāē* – 'compassion towards and protection of all living things in the world' – Tirthankar Mahavir walked from village to village and city to city for 30 years. I have a

[12] *The Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, vol 22, p 249

great respect for Jainism because it gives equal emphasis to working towards one's own purification and working collaboratively with others for the universal good. The Tirthankars always establish a *tirth* to preach their message for the welfare of others. Once he had gained *keval-gyan* (omniscience), Tirthankar Mahavir could have lived a solitary life in the jungle, but this is not the way of the Tirthankars. The aim of Jainism is to share with others the beauty of the truth that you yourself have attained. You should take the ideas that have purified you to the world at large. It stresses that treasures found by you be found in equal measure by more and more people, until everyone in the world shares them.

This vision of universal welfare was the foundation stone of Jainism in South India. While historians are not able to specify the exact period when Jainism first penetrated the South, my own records tell me that at the beginning of 1st century AD, the great banyan tree of Jain religion and culture began to grow in that area and spread its branches with especially strong roots in Tamil and Kannad. I hope it won't create a controversy if I say that from that period onwards for a thousand years Jainism more or less prevailed over the whole of South India.

The People's Faith : Essential Seed for the Growth of Jainism

The annals of my memory hold in their deep recesses a fascinating episode of Jain history that occurred in South India. It's worth knowing about this remarkable phase of history because it was one of the most important periods in the growth of Jainism. Some historians believe that Jainism came to South India when a twelve-year long famine gripped the north and thousands of *shramans* emigrated to the south [13]. However, other historians assert that Jainism already existed in South India [14] and that the influx during 3rd century BC gave fresh impetus to its spread. With the help of royal dynasties and through popular support South India became one of the leading centres of Jain activity. The cultural and social foundations of the South were strengthened by the Jains through their solid contributions to art, temple building, centres of learning and other welfare programmes.

Dakshin Bharat Mein Jain Dharma, Pt. Kailash Chandra Shastri, p 1

Ibid, p 1

Oh, that one thousand years of the Jains in South India! I call this the golden age of Jainism, not because many archaeological remains of that period have been found, or that in-depth literary works in the languages of Tamil, Telugu and Kannad were written, or that the Jains had royal patronage and that their teachings were highly respected by kings and common people alike, or that Jainism was the most popular religion, but because of the manner in which Jain sadhus and sadhvis worked for the people. I really admire the way the 'renouncers' of that time truly followed the teachings of the Tirthankars. They became a powerful driving force in conducting activities for the common good. They developed a unique 'oneness' with the people and received love and respect in return. So strong were the ties of mutual affection between guru and disciple that the rock carvings of that period heap praise on the good works of the Jain gurus and refer to Jain acharyas in a very informal and friendly manner.

Jain gurus, by their wisdom, decency, scholarship and spirituality, mesmerised the people of the South, and by composing literary works in local languages, greatly enriched their culture. By creating works of art, building temples, educational establishments and hospitals, and engaging in other worthwhile charitable works, they strengthened the cultural, ethical and religious foundations of the South. This was based not only on support from royal dynasties and high officials, but also on the love and devotion of the common people for the principles of Jainism. Contemplating that epoch with great gratification, I feel that it cannot have been easy for the Jain *shramans* to inculcate devotion for Jainism amongst people of a different language and culture. Jainism would never have achieved such acceptance and popularity if the Jain *shramans* had not first immersed themselves in social work, artistic creation and literary scholarship – tasks not immediately conducive to their own liberation. I am greatly indebted to these hardworking *shramans*; they were like bright lights who will illuminate the path of spirituality in the years to come, and their praiseworthy deeds will continue to inspire the coming generations.

The Abundance of Jain Literature in the Languages of South India

The true impact of Jainism's contribution to South Indian culture cannot just be described in a few pages. Even if I gloss over its contribution to South Indian art and architecture, the enrichment of Tamil and Kannad literature alone is immense. The famous Jain scholar Pandit Kailash Chandra Shastri writes that Tamil and Kannad literature are greatly indebted to the Jains who were incomparable writers, aesthetes and scholars[15]. In fact Jains were the originators of the classical literature of South India. Modern Tamil still uses many words of Sanskrit origin introduced by the Jains who were careful to transform the Sanskrit words in accordance with the rules of Tamil phonetics so as to preserve the consonance and harmony of the language.

It is believed that the *Tolakappiyam*, the oldest grammar book in the Tamil language, was written by Jain grammarian Tolakappiya. Though it is largely a treatise on the study of language, it's also a treasure-trove of ancient Tamil customs and observances and is regarded as the foundation of all Tamil literature. To this day it is a pillar of light to anthropologists and cultural historians concerned with the development of Tamil society, culture and mores.

Another great book of Tamil literature was Tiruvallavara's *Kural*. Though there is still a debate about the author's religion and the date of the writing, its greatness remains undisputed. Many latter-day historians agree that the *Kural* was written by a Jain scholar. My present purpose, however, is not to join in the debate but to highlight the beautiful and inspiring way the Jains disseminated their ethical and moral values. Dedicated to the welfare of the people and embracing the pluralism of the country, Jain acharyas learnt to write books in complicated languages to such good effect that their works were sometimes credited to local authors! The purpose behind their writings was that Jain ideas should not remain confined to any one community but be available for all.

Dakshin Bharat Mein Jain Dharma, Pt. Kailash Chandra Shastri, p 25

Pandit Kailashchandra Shastri writes that the period following the writing of the *Kural* was the golden age of Tamil literary culture and that the Jains played a vital role in bringing it about[16]. In the face of bitter opposition from the Brahmins, they supported the native languages of the South and planted Aryan ideas all over South India.

How can I begin to list all the names? How do I count the pearls on this lovely literary rosary? *Naladiyar, Shilappadikaram, Chintamani, Narivi, Neelekeshi* and countless other little-known Tamil works are an inalienable part of Tamil culture, all testifying to the mighty contribution of the Jain writers. The *Kural* and the *Naladiyar* are the most important of the eighteen Tamil books on ethical values. Of the five great Tamil epics, three were written by Jains. *Chintamani* is said to be the masterpiece of Tamil literature and even Shaiv scholars, who were greatly opposed to Jainism, did not hesitate to praise it

Prof. Ayyangar has written that it is unfortunate that many Tamil Jain texts have survived only in the form of disintegrating palm leaf manuscripts, lying forgotten in *bhandars* (libraries).[17] The extent of Jainism's contribution to South Indian history and culture will only be fully appreciated if these manuscripts are salvaged and brought into the mainstream of research and study by scholars.

In addition to Tamil and Telugu, the Jains wrote in Kannad from the beginning of 1st century AD until 12th century AD. Jain writers have done much for the development of Kannad culture. *Aadipumpa* and *Abhinavpumpa* are two classics of Kannad literature. The matchless manner in which the poet Pump has written about the wonders of Indian culture in works like *Aadipuran* and *Bharat* defies description. Many women writers of the Jain faith played an important role in enriching Kannad literature. Amongst them Kanti is noteworthy for completing the stunning epic poem, the *Abhinavpump*, and writing original works on religion and ethics.

Dakshin Bharat Mein Jain Dharma, Pt. Kailash Chandra Shastri, p 10
Studies in South Indian Jainism, Ramaswami Ayyangar, p 104

The Jains wrote seminal works on subjects like grammar, arithmetic, astrology, ayurveda and medicine. In 1125 AD a Jain *shraman*, Kirtivarsh, wrote *Govaidya*, a scholarly work on veterinary science. I do not recall any field of scholarship that escaped the attention of the Jain writers of South India.

Chamund Rai : Jain Warrior Patron

My eyes, closed in reverie, do not want to open to the present. The scene on my inner eye is so pleasing, yet so astonishing, that I can only describe it as the building up of the rhythms of the *mridangam* (an Indian percussion instrument), bringing South India alive in harmony. I am lost in rapture. Diffused throughout creation, my very being seems to have frozen, and set like amber around South India's golden age. I start to wonder whether art and literature can be created without experiencing inner bliss. There is a saying that when the vessel is full to the brim, it will pour forth its riches. When a flower opens, it cannot hold back its fragrance, it perfumes the surroundings naturally. By the same token, inner emptiness can never be the foundation of any creativity.

Works of art, whether created by Jains or others, are always a spontaneous overflowing of an inner abundance. The sculptor merely 'reveals' the statue slumbering within the rock. I feel grateful for that stony monolith within which, for aeons, 'slumbered' the 71



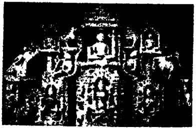
Shri Gomateshwar Bahubali

ft. high form of Shri Gomateshwar Bahubali at Shravan Belgola in Mysore. This is a very





A bronze statue of Tirthankar Parshvanath



An ancient stone sculpture

holy pilgrimage spot and one of the wonders of world sculpture. From the artistic point of view, it is peerless. Though it is a thousand years old, this stone statue remains eternally young, winning us over with its beauty and modesty. We owe this marvellous piece to the piety of Chamund Rai. The historian Dr. Saltor says that no other warrior in the history of Karnatak has rivalled Chamund Rai's devotion to Jainism[18]. He was an illustrious warrior but also very aware of the creative instinct.

When Chamund Rai went into battle, his terrified enemies would flee the field, seeking shelter wherever they could. I marvel at the paradox of this powerful sword-bearer protecting his country yet being responsible for the creation of such a sensitive masterpiece. The sculpture was wondrous but was not its patron even more wonderful? Is not the commander-in-chief Chamund Rai living proof of the success of the twofold spiritual journey – that of the development of the self and the helping of others – as described by the Tirthankars? Whatever the case, historical personalities like Chamund Rai are worthy of my praise because along with faultlessly doing their duty, they were tireless in spreading the riches of Jainism.

The Wide-ranging Impact of Jain Art

While Jains made remarkable contributions to South Indian literature, their efforts to promote art will also live forever in my memory.



Inscribed records on Sittanvasal rock

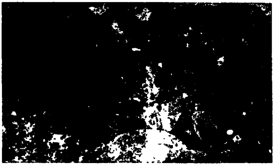
Sittanvasal is a long range of hills in Tamil

Pramukh Aitihasik Jain Purush Aur Mahilayen, Dr Jyoti Prasad Jain, p 83



A Jain shraman enlightens a prince

Nadu, where the splendour of Jainism flowered for fifteen hundred years. A masterpiece of Jain temple architecture is to be found there. Art experts opine that its murals compare with those of Ajanta and Ellora. This fantastic specimen of ancient



Lotus in a pond. An example of Sittanvasal painting

Jain art is the earliest surviving example of paintings in South India.

It was as a result of the Jain community's efforts that interest in temple building increased in South India. Many temples were constructed and a movement was begun to lift up the hearts of people by the peaceful and pure sound of worship. The art-loving Jains had sculptors create breathtaking statues of their Tirthankars in a variety of styles and they introduced different forms of worship for these impressive creations. Traditions of other religions in South India also benefited from the impetus the Jains gave to art, culture and morality. It would not be excessive to say that the violence involved in Vedic sacrifices was brought to an end through the influence of Jainism. Tamil poets and others involved in the sacrifices were inspired by the non-violent practices of the Jains, and substituted effigies of flour for the live animals during their religious rituals.

Jain Gurus Guide Politics

Political forces have always influenced society. I believe that religion will not be able to fulfil its mission as long as politics refuses to lend its support to religious principles. The Jain acharyas made an indelible impression on me because they built the characters of kings, generals, ministers and other notables who then went on to carry out their public duties in an exemplary manner, proving their devotion to their religion by working tirelessly for the reform of society along Jain lines.

Karnatak was called the home of Jainism. The local population was so affectionate towards the Jain promoters and teachers that gradually, from being an alien creed, it became the native religion. From 2nd century to 13th century AD, it influenced kings and subjects alike. Its impact on some of the royal families was such that it guided them in every aspect of their lives. Those who think of Jainism as a religion exclusively devoted to the liberation of the self will be surprised to know that its success in Karnatak was not just due to its metaphysical aspects. This is only one half of the story. Other factors include the influential entry of Jain gurus into politics; they involved themselves in nation building and service to the people rather than restricting themselves only to a didactic role. The result was that the premier dynasties of the South became enthusiastic exponents of Jain culture, and prominent people in the administration gratefully embraced Jainism and worked for its expansion.

This support was not one-sided. The guidance of Jain acharyas worked as the foundation for the royal dynasties to prosper. Luis Rais says that over a period of several centuries, the Gang dynasty, one of the prominent dynasties of the South, put a great effort into protecting and expanding Jainism[19]. The credit for this goes to the far-sighted and highly effective Acharya Simhanandi who gave them support and encouragement when it was needed the most. One after the other, all the successors to the Rashtrakuta, Chalukya and Hoyasala dynasties put their weight behind the growth of Jainism and merged themselves completely in its development. King Amoghvarsh of the Rashtrakuta dynasty became a very devout Jain and his deeds made him beloved of his subjects. The *Shatkhandagam* and the *Kashaypahud* are two of the most respected and comprehensive *Agamas* of the Digambar tradition. As a result of the patronage of Amoghvarsh, *Dhavala* and *Jayadhavala*, two scholarly commentaries, were written on these scriptures. The credit of bringing this historical work into being goes to Acharyas Veerasen and Jinasen.

Mysore Gazetteer I, p. 308-310

The more I look at this golden period of the Jains in South India, the more its beauty increases. The age that sings the pure notes of Jainism blends harmoniously with the melody I sing. The Jain acharyas used their wisdom and spiritual powers to influence both royalty and the common people alike for centuries. This pure form of Jainism was due to the universal love practised by Jain acharyas; they had no expectations for the aggrandisement of self. The main proponents of this triumphant journey of Jainism were the shramans. They were so caught up in the blissful path of altruistic action that their individual identities merged with this great mission. Such was their virtue that the tiny seed of Tirthankar Mahavir's religion grew into a great banyan tree. In my view the duty of a true disciple is always to take the burning torch from his guru and make it into a great bonfire, thus lighting up everyone's life.

Jainism: A Balance Between Pravrutti and Nivrutti

I think that the *shramans* of South India completely understood the difference between *pravrutti* (the active life) and nivrutti (abstention from worldly acts), knowing exactly which was appropriate at any given moment. They were thus able to do creative and excellent work in South India for a thousand years, memories of which, centuries later, remain a priceless part of my being.

What makes me sad is that, despite its invaluable contribution to society and a profoundly proactive stance, Jainism is still dismissed as a religion of *nivrutti* alone. It stands accused of an irresponsible attitude towards the welfare of humanity. The extent of its influence has been belittled and its role in the betterment of the world at large has not been taken into account. This has happened because the historical, social and cultural achievements of Jainism at all levels have not been recognised. Jainism is a religion of *samyak pravrutti* (taking the right action) as well. Nowhere in Jainism, whether it be in its principles or practices, its thoughts or deeds, is there a withdrawal from responsibility towards family, society or nation.



The Kalpasutra handwritten on palm leaves

Some people say Jainism is a philosophy for pessimists running away from reality and that its principles instill in its followers an aversion for home, neglect of worldly duties and a cowardly retreat into a community existence. Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji has rejected this view out of hand. He says that Jain philosophy, whose life blood is ahimsa, teaches man to fulfil in an ideal way, family, social and national obligations. It inculcates compassion, dedication and the drive to serve others, and teaches people to properly discharge all their duties and ethical responsibilities. The positive aspect of ahimsa is that people actively follow a path of loving others.

Jain philosophy is so all-embracing, it strikes the right balance between pravrutti and nivrutti. *Asuhādō vinivatti suhē pavitti ya jāṇa cārittaṃ* – 'the correct way of living is withdrawal from wrongdoing and involvement in good deeds'. In the Jain path of purification there are codes for *samiti* (taking the correct action) and *gupti* (refraining from wrongdoing). In this way *gupti* is a form of *nivrutti* and *samiti* is a form of *pravrutti*. It is as a result of this balance between *pravrutti* and *nivrutti* that the Jain *shramans* have been able to attain the extraordinary in many fields. In their every action there was a withdrawal, and in every withdrawal an action.

The Contribution of Jain Acharyas to Literature

Observing the Jain contribution to literature, Prof. Buller has written that even the detractors of Jainism have agreed on the outstanding contribution of the Jains to literature, grammar, astronomy, medicine and other branches of learning[20]. Western scholars are still finding out many hidden aspects of Jain lore. Prof. Buller has made this statement only on the basis of available evidence, but I know the truth; I am an eye witness, which is why I am telling you that the Jain writers excelled not only in sacred writings but also in all other branches of literature as well. They wrote wonderful works on subjects like grammar, vocabulary, rhetoric, logic, drama, epic-narratives, history, politics, economics, astrology, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, geology and even magic.

* *Jain-Camar Smrityan*, Shri Manmal Jain Martand, p 449

Though I would like to discuss Jain culture at length, an adequate evaluation of it cannot be given either in words or in any other form of language, for no matter how glorious a picture I paint it will fall short of what I feel. When the ruins so testify to the splendour of the monument, the monument itself transcends all words. However, I know my feelings will be vindicated when connoisseurs - who possess an in-depth knowledge, or who are able to penetrate from the outer form to the inner essence and see things smaller even than the atom - are able to delve into the wealth of Jain wisdom, brought into the open by me, and convey its wonders to others in a manner that all may listen and understand.

As I write I wonder where to begin and who to mention first. I have so many jewel-like Jain Acharyas in my treasure chest, each more brilliant than the last. Their splendour cannot be dimmed by the dust of the ages, nor their legend tarnished. They remain worthy of veneration even today.

Acharya Devardhigani: A Shining Star

My pen now gathers speed to salute those Jain acharyas marked out for a special mention, those shining stars in the firmament of Jain religion. My first tribute is to Acharya Devardhigani, who lived in 5th century AD, and to whom Jain society is eternally in debt.

It is true that Acharya Bhadrabahu, the inspirer of the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta, and Acharya Suhasti, Raja Samprati's guru, are pillars of light - glistening like beacons on the religious path. They are like sherpas guiding the mountaineers in conquering the peaks of spiritual progress and prosperity. Another glowing personality in this series of inspirational acharyas is Devardhigani Kshamashraman. His life story is worth recording because he considered defending Jainism more important than observing tradition. When the outer observances of a religion obscure its essence, the true champion is the one who takes up the challenge of change. It's worth noting that at



Acharya Devardhigani Kshmashraman writing down the scriptures

one time Jain sadhus and sadhvis were not allowed to write due to their code of conduct, so Tirthankar Mahavir's words were not recorded for nearly a thousand years after his nirvana in 527 BC. Devardhigani, by his courage and tenacity, broke through this convention and arranged for the transcribing and collecting of the disparate teachings of Tirthankar Mahavir. I remember how delighted I was when this work began; it was like the smell of the first rain after years of drought. It was so exciting because, through the insight of Devardhigani, the words and thoughts of Mahavir would live forever and continue to inspire future generations. But when the traditionalists would not accept Devardhigani's innovations, my happiness was short-lived.

In my experience epoch-makers are always facing up to challenges, but they are never deterred from their path by any opposition or adverse circumstances. For this revered Acharya, the prestige and pride of Jainism was all-important, so he set about initiating the revolutionary task of writing down the *Agamas* (canonical literature) – a great gift to Jain society. Unfortunately, so many excellent things said by Tirthankar Mahavir have already been lost to us. If they had been written down at the time, the glory of Jainism would have been much more resplendent today. What little of the sayings of this great prophet could be saved, we owe to the farsightedness and creative vision of Devardhigani and all his collaborators.



The freeing of Sadhvi Saraswati from the clutches of King Gardhabhil by Acharya Kalak

Acharya Kalak Follows the Exception to the Rule

The next object of my veneration is Acharya Kalak who responded decisively to a very complex and difficult situation. Jainism is intricately woven with a set of rules and sub-rules. However, when circumstances are unavoidable, exceptions to these rules are always acted upon. As Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji has said, "Life's chariot in travelling along the path of spiritual purification will only attain speed if both wheels, one of rule and the other of exception, are equally steady and have equal momentum; only then will the aspirant attain his goal." [1]

Adaptation to the needs of the age and permission to follow the exceptions to the rule is Jainism's hallmark. This is precisely what Acharya Kalak did to free Sadhvi Saraswati from the outrage perpetrated on her by King Gardhabhil when he kidnapped her. Though a Jain sadhu, Kalak chose to fight the unjust king to protect the sadhvi. If someone were to ask me whether this was consistent with his vow of ahimsa, with his promise never to commit the smallest act of himsa, I would reply with utter conviction that it was the right thing to do. In the circumstances he had to go beyond the rules and follow the exception. It was as a result of the sharp intellect and broad outlook of the Jain *shramans* that appropriate solutions were found as and when required and Jainism could face all the ups and downs it encountered. The growth of any religion, whose followers are not able to respond to the needs of the age, will inevitably be stunted. I see that some of today's Jain community hide behind the protection of these rules and are unwilling to take on the new age. The repercussions of this may be that the independent younger generation, used to applying the test of reason to all things, might ridicule the short-sightedness of some of their elders once they find out that the great acharyas of the past never hesitated to move with the times.

Sociologists say that the younger generation today is more intelligent and better educated than previous generations. If so, the question they will ask is: "Is life made for rules, or are rules made for life?" I pray

[1] *Bnna Samikkhaye Dhammam* Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muni, p 228

that these brilliant young people will get answers to their questions and receive proper guidance in following the path of progress. Perhaps we will then see epoch-making personalities like Kundakund, Mantung and Umasvati grow in them.

Kundakund: The Golden Philosopher

In the process of lauding and appraising some of Jainism's towering pillars of wisdom, my gaze fondly dwells on Acharya Kundakund. Some experts say he lived in 1st century AD while others place him in 7th century AD. It is universally admitted that his work, filled with the deeper meaning of the knowledge of the soul, led people to new peaks of spirituality and a sounder, more logical interpretation of the *Agamas*. Although he wrote eighty four *prabhrits* (small books), detailing essential aspects of inner-development, his seminal work was the *Samaysar*. This work, written from a very unconventional point of view, emphasises the innate purity of the soul rather than the conditioned state of bondage, and contains within it beautiful descriptions of the 'nine realities' and the 'three jewels'. It's not only the crowning glory of his writings, but also one of the greatest achievements in the doctrine of human perfectibility and is well respected by scholars everywhere. Free from all worldly ambitions, his works mirror his own inner excellence. Those who fear karmic bondage through indulging in creative work could learn from his example. *Nivrutti* from *ashubh* (inauspicious) and *pravrutti* in *shubh* (auspicious), was the single-minded pursuit of praiseworthy people like Kundakund and relentlessly following this path, they attained the summit of purity.

Buddhism became a world religion because *Bodhisattva's* concept prioritises working for the salvation of all sentient beings rather than concentrating solely on attaining one's own liberation. The *Bodhisattva's* delaying of his own deliverance until he has helped all sentient beings to liberation is a notion that rests on universal compassion. I don't know how practical this sentiment is but I can say that nowhere else have I found such a striking expression of altruism. I don't know whether Jainism will ever be able to

embrace altruistic concerns for others to the extent of rejecting one's own emancipation, but I hope that its propagators will lay equal emphasis on solicitude for others, along with the zeal for working on the liberation of the self.

Umasvati : A Lustrous Pearl

Acharya Umasvati figures high on the list of spiritual teachers who could see beyond the limits of tradition. He systematised Jain canonical teaching into a coherent philosophy and was the first acharaya to use Sanskrit to write Jain religious works. Umasvati's command of Sanskrit and his far-sighted step of presenting the *Agamas* in the literary language of his age, awakens our admiration even today. His *Tattvartha-Sutra* is a work of genius that is still appearing in new and updated translations. It is a comprehensive summary of all aspects of Jain philosophy and has the distinction of being claimed by both the Shvetambar and Digambar traditions.

Acharya Siddhasen Diwakar: Unrestricted by Restrictions

Acharya Siddhasen also daringly presented the Jain *Agamas* in Sanskrit, a very arduous and commendable task, earning him a special place in the cultural annals of the Jains. In the book of the history of the Jains, Siddhasen is an unforgettable 'chapter'. His larger than life personality and remarkable literary achievements are beyond compare. His accomplishments in many fields of literature, be they logic, poetry or philosophy, show evidence of profound thought, clear expression and total fearlessness. It is believed that in the Jain philosophy there was no separate theory for the study of logic before Siddhasen. It was still bound up with other schools of philosophy. He established a distinct school of thought on Jain logic in immortal works like *Nyayavatar* and *Sanmatitark*.

Acharya Siddhasen brought about an unparalleled blending of poetry and philosophy in his works. In those days Sanskrit was gaining in prestige whilst Prakrit was regarded as a language for the

expression of more mundane things. The Jain *Agamas* were in Prakrit. To elevate the status of the Jain *Agamas* amongst scholars it was necessary for Siddhasen to translate them into Sanskrit. It was difficult for the sadhus, bound by the tradition and rules of their order, to accept change, so they opposed him at every turn. They said to Siddhasen, "Why have you translated the *Agamas* into Sanskrit? If Tirthankar Mahavir and his *Ganadhars* (the first mendicant disciples of a Tirthankar) had wanted us to learn the scriptures in Sanskrit, they would have given them to us in this language. Tirthankar Mahavir was all-knowing; didn't he know about this language Sanskrit? There must have been some purpose in preaching the *Agamas* in Ardhamagadhi only." As punishment for his 'rebelliousness', Acharya Siddhasen was expelled from the order for twelve years. The Acharya, who had great respect for his order, did not take his banishment as an insult, rather he relied on his own feeling of self-worth, and took it as a challenge and an opportunity to develop inner strength.

Tirthankar Mahavir chose to preach in Prakrit because it was then the language of the common people and it was appropriate in that environment. I do not ever remember Tirthankar Mahavir stipulating that Prakrit should be the sole language used in the teaching and preaching of Jainism. When I observe the manner in which Buddhism quickly adopted languages as different as Sinhalese, Japanese, Chinese and Korean, it is very disheartening to see that Jainism took so long in making the relatively small step from Prakrit to Sanskrit. It seems that the infinite ideas of Mahavir were confined to a very narrow spectrum of expression. Whilst Christianity, the most active missionary religion of the day, ensured that its holy book, *The Bible*, was available in almost every language, some Jain traditionalists were reluctant to embrace even the prestigious national literary language of ancient India.

I am not saying that this reluctance still exists to the same extent; Jainism currently uses many languages other than Prakrit to put across its message. However, whilst other

religions have adopted modern technology, adapting their literature for CD-ROM and the Internet, and are trying to present their philosophy in a more attractive and easily accessible manner, Jainism has not been able to keep up with them. I don't know whether it is the restrictions imposed by Jain canon law, or the fact that people have reneged on their responsibility to update and distribute the literature that has led to this tardiness. People are only now beginning to take up the task they should have begun long ago - the dissemination of Jain teachings in a popular format. What can I say? Being history's witness, all I can do is plead that the precedent set by Siddhasen should not be ignored. If today some public-spirited Jain should embark on the work of presenting the Jain scriptures in a fitting form, let him not be denounced for violating tradition.

We have seen how Siddhasen was punished and banished from the Jain *sangh* for twelve years. He had never given in to the opinions of the traditionalists; he could not just blindly follow beliefs without testing the truth of them first. I salute Siddhasen Diwakar and hope that luminaries like him will again rise in the heavens of the Jain tradition and guide the scattered Jain community to a new dimension where they will make a clear distinction between tradition and religion.

Acharya Siddhasen was held in the same esteem in the Shvetambar tradition as Samantbhadra Swami was amongst the Digambars. The doctrine of *anekantvad*, the axis upon which Jainism rotates, was an indivisible part of Samantbhadra's life and he weighed his every utterance upon the 'scales' of *syadvad* (the doctrine of qualified assertion). Whilst advancing the frontiers of Jain logic and *nyaya* (justice), Samantbhadra wrote the *Aaptamimansa*, giving the world of philosophy a priceless treasure. During the same period, the impeccable wisdom and irreproachable scholarship of Acharya Akalank, who conceived an original work on *nyaya* - *Akalank-nyaya-sidhanta* - astonishes me. The treatises on nyaya, such as the *Nyayavinishchaya*, the *Laghiyastraya* and the *Praman-sangrah*, still remain most respected in

Indian philosophical circles today.

In spite of continuous debates on the interpretation of canon law - of what rules to follow and what prohibitions to observe - Jainism has still managed to make an incredible contribution to world culture. Rahul Sankrityayan, an acclaimed scholar, writes: 'The Jains have played a very important role in the creation and preservation of Apabhramsh literature.' [22] Cultural historians have gone so far as to say that the glory of Sanskrit literature would shrivel up if the contribution of the Jains were removed. All the paths of Jain culture must be patiently trodden if the lush green forests of Indian cultural history are to be fully explored.

Acharya Haribhadra: A Blossoming of Yoga Literary Works

I sometimes feel that it is beyond my capacity to express fully the span of Jainism's literary works and the accomplishments of its creators. After Acharyas Siddhasen and Samantbhadra, writers of great calibre came up thick and fast and kept on adding to my scholarly treasures. Acharyas Devnandi, Jinbhadragani Kshamashraman, Akalak, Mantung, Bappabhatti, Amritchandra, Abhaydev, Nemichandra, Haribhadra - who stands out the most? Who wears the brightest colours? Each in their own way has beautified 'the garden' of Jain literature. As I walk among these exquisite flowers, I always stop in wonder before the buds and blossoms of the name of Acharya Haribhadra. He was a great fountain of knowledge on Jain literature. His works are a rare gift to us. He was the first commentator in Sanskrit on the *Agamas*. The many-faceted splendours of the *Agamas* like the *Avashyak*, the *Deshvaikalik*, the *Nandi*, the *Anuyogdvar*, the *Pragyapana* and the *Jivabhigam* exploded with light when exposed to his laser-like commentary! Tradition has it that he wrote 1,444 works and, in my view, he is the colossus of the Jain literary world.

They say that folk tales show the true face of a culture. Jain fables occupy pride of place in India's treasure-trove of stories, revealing the very soul of the country. Both Eastern

[22] Jain Gaurav-Smritiyan, Shri Manmal Jain Martand, P438

and Western scholars agree that Jain munis must take the credit for preserving the ancient tradition of telling stories. Acharya Sanghdasgani's *Vasudevhindi* and Haribhadrasuri's *Samraichkaha* are at the forefront of narrative literature. They are a fascinating presentation of etymology, folklore, iconography and spiritual philosophy. Haribhadra was also a powerful reformist as well as a skilful and ironic writer of stories. He was considered an innovator in writing works on the science of yoga. His *Yogabindu*, *Yogadrishtisamuchaya* and *Yogashatak* are considered comparable to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, and are important works on yoga from the Jain point of view.

A Treasure-Trove of Literary Creation

Jain *shramans* wrote routinely about the topics of spiritual science, yoga, ethics, philosophy, nyaya and grammar, nevertheless they also touched on every other aspect of literature. As well as being useful and informative, their works also excelled in literary merit. I will always offer up eulogies to the dazzling brilliance of the learned works of the Jain savants; but at the same time I will always be haunted by the fact that, of the treasure chest of texts created by them with such dedication under such adverse conditions, only a very small percentage has been revealed to the public. Unfortunately many of these works are now totally neglected and remain unpublished. They are left to decay, or even worse, their silence provides ammunition for national and sectarian controversy. The Jain laity has spent millions of rupees on building magnificent *bhandars* to house these priceless texts, but ignorance of their worth and a certain carelessness leaves them to languish in oblivion.

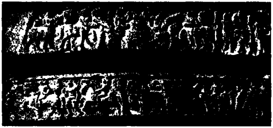
Bikaner, Patan, Khambat, Limbdi, Jaisalmer and Moodbidri are only some of the places where thousands of unpublished Jain literary works can be found, attracting scholars from all over India and abroad. If only these wondrous texts could be published, translated into many languages and disseminated world-wide, what a transformation there would be in world culture; what a paradigm shift in human consciousness!



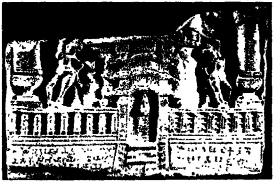
Carved stone statues of the Tirthankars in Gwalior

The Spread of Jainism to Different Provinces

In the triumphal pageant of Jain history that I am presenting, the torchbearers are undoubtedly Tirthankar Mahavir's community of renunciants and if the spread of Jainism testifies to their strength and unequivocal fidelity to his ideals, then so too does Jainism's decline indicate a diminishing of their capabilities. So long as Jainism had a tradition of these resplendent Jain acharyas, its fragrance permeated many lands. Jainism sprang up wherever their footprints fell, not just in South India but in North, West and Central India. The discovery of Jain stupas on the Kankali mound in Mathura, a city in northern India, along with other ancient statues and rock inscriptions, demonstrates that it too was once a stronghold of Jainism. Along with Mathura, Ujjain, Hastinapur, Devgad, Badayun, Vidisha, Vallabhi and Gwaliyar were also vibrant centres of Jain influence. Shouraseni, a dialect of Prakrit, in which many Jain works are written, originated in Mathura. The people of Mathura often relate that women took a leading role in the creation and building of Jain statues.[11] Due to its geographical position, Mathura was a magnet for merchants and was connected with every other centre of commerce in the country. Since Jain *shramans* have always greatly influenced the merchant classes, Mathura proved fertile ground for Jainism.



Carved entrance to the Mathura Stupa



Avaga Pata of Mathura. A carved Stone Slab

Jain Itihas Ki Punya Pithika Aur Hamara Abhyuthan, Dr Hiralal Jain, p 73

Influential Jain Households

I have noticed throughout all these years that some wealthy Jain families owe their prosperity to the proper practice of their religion. I have seen much evidence of the virtues of truthfulness, adaptability and fearlessness in their individual personalities. A non-addictive lifestyle, close family ties and a natural inclination to do good for others, are the hallmark of their harmonious existence within the community. Man is not
67 just a painting that can be hung up or moved around by others, neither is he a kite that can be raised up or brought down with a jerk according to the whim of someone else. It is only by his own virtues that a man rises. Jainism's stress on self-reliance and individual initiative has always made it popular with those willing to take responsibility for their own well-being and their actions towards others. Thus in many kingdoms in North and Central India, these qualities elevated members of the Jain community to responsible positions in the administration. They became ministers, army commanders, treasury officials, judges and law officers, and brought approbation to the offices they occupied whilst still continuing to serve their own community and religion.

Jains *shravaks* were particularly influential in the daily administration of Rajasthan and also took a lead in local politics. Shri Manmal Jain Martand writes that the Jains played a prominent role in the building up of Rajasthan [11]. Though no known Jain king actually ruled there, in many instances Jains were regarded as king-makers. So whilst Rajasthan is not Jainism's royal ground, still it honours the Jain community as 'builders' of the state. I am sure no objections will be raised if I say that those model Jains demonstrated true greatness of character in their role as Rajasthan's developers and defenders. I have seen how Jain far-sightedness and political astuteness helped shape the history of Udaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Sirohi, Kishangad and other princely states. It was on the deeply ingrained principles of these people that the foundations of the citadel of Jainism was raised. The concept of ahimsa caused the Jains to scale the peaks of a higher

[11] *Jain-Gaurav Smritiyan*, Shri Manmal Jain Martand, p.353

consciousness and its practice gave them the status of great heroes.

The beginnings of a tradition of responsibility towards family, society and nation do not lie in the modern age; they were initiated by the *shravaks* of Mahavir's era. Tirthankar Mahavir himself took into consideration which practices would be beneficial to the individual, society and the country, and laid down a process whereby spiritual purification could be sought by *shravaks*. Those who see Jainism as a religion where the spiritual path starts only with renunciation of the world will be surprised at the fact that Tirthankar Mahavir took laymen and women into his religious community and showed them the way to spiritual development. It is worth noting that when Anand, the first *shravak* devotee of Tirthankar Mahavir, came and knelt at his feet and asked to take *diksha* (initiation) for his own spiritual progress, Mahavir said to him, 'Anand! Even as a *shravak*, you can progress towards self-realisation.' A worshipful Jain householder who discharges his duties, does not shirk his responsibilities and obeys the teachings of the *Jinas* (Tirthankars), could be held in even greater esteem than a sadhu.

Philanthropist Bhamashah

Rajasthan really is such a special place; it has been irrigated with the gentle waters of the deeds of the Jain *shravaks*. Heroes of Jainism have shown great patriotism and public spiritedness and have thus inscribed themselves upon my memory. Among those who served their king and country wholeheartedly, Bhamashah's name stands out as worthy of a most honourable mention. What can I say about this singularly humble man who gave all his wealth to King Maharana Pratap, when the latter was on the point of admitting defeat and leaving Mewar in despair? Without Bhamashah's generous support, the history of Mewar would have been very different. This gesture of Bhamashah's is highly commendable, and his clear understanding of the concept of *dana* (donation) has impressed me tremendously. He obviously believed that, along with the religious orders, individuals, society, and the nation



Maharana Pratap and Bhamashah

should be the recipients of *dana*; they should be supported as well. He is an example of a Jain layman showing that one's country should be put before one's own interests.

After the twelfth century, the building of Jain temples became a symbol of pride for royal families and the upper classes in Rajasthan. This was a great period of prosperity for the Jains. It was at this moment that Bhamashah, instead of spending his wealth on temple buildings, donated his entire fortune, which historian Colonel Todd calculates as sufficient to keep an army of 25,000 in the field for twelve years [illegible], to the national cause. This true philanthropist spurned the idea of winning immortal fame by building temples, giving his money instead for the defence of his country. He did this despite knowing that violence would have to occur in fighting for the freedom of the nation. In my view Bhamashah exemplified what it is to be an ideal Jain, one who helps others in difficulty, empathises with others in sorrow and sacrifices all in the cause of duty.

It has been fascinating for me to see how Tirthankar Mahavir continued to oppose violence, work towards the abolition of slavery, advocate equal status for women and work for many other worthy causes, even after he achieved *Kaivalya*. In the final moments of his nirvana he sent his disciple Gautam to stop Agnisharma Brahmin carrying out the ritual sacrifice of animals. To give strength to those without strength was

Jain-Gaurav Smritiyan, Shri Manmal Jain Martand p 361

his life's objective, and it was this principle which Bhamashah adopted as his own.

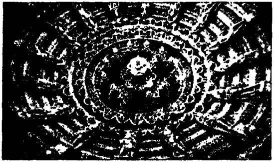
To select only worthy recipients for *dana*, and make a distinction between *vrati* (one who takes vows), and *avrati* (one who does not take vows), is to destroy the essence of compassion. At present, a major section of Jain society, not fully grasping the true meaning of the concept of *dana*, is engaged in building more and more temples when really a greater number of schools and hospitals is needed to prevent people falling into further deprivation. I am not opposed to the construction of temples as such, but the basic amenities of life should take priority. The most important thing about a civilised society is that its members help one another, and gurus can take the lead in reminding people of their real obligations. I believe Bhamashah must have had a visionary guru who motivated him to make this inspired sacrifice for the common good.

Enduring Monuments of Jain Art in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is the home of some incomparable Jain temples and works of art. The Ranakpur temple in Marvad is considered a masterpiece. Built in the fifteenth century by Dhannashah and Ratnashah, in the reign of Maharana Kumbh, this building is made up of 1,441 pillars and 84 *Jinalayas*, or temples, crowned with superbly crafted spires. Ferguson considers the architecture of the temple sublime, and says that nowhere in India have pillars in a temple been constructed so exquisitely, producing, as they do, a divine impression on the mind.[76]

Unrivalled by any in India are the sculptures at the Vimalvasahi temple on Mt. Abu, built in the thirteenth century by Vimalmantrishwar. Whenever I see the ethereal beauty of the work of this place, it's as if the goddess of art has been reincarnated right here in this temple. Colonel Todd writes that besides the Taj Mahal, no other construction or monument in India bears comparison with it[77]. Ferguson adds that the way in which the statuettes are fashioned, though they are in marble, is like a tracery of lace. He says that it is impossible to

[76] *Jain-Gaurav-Smritiyan* Shri Manmal Jain Martand, p.487
Ibid, p 487



Intricately carved ceiling of the Rang Mandap in Vimalvasahi Temple



Rang Mandap ceiling in the Lunigvasahi Temple

capture on paper even a 'ghost of its glories', or render in words even a 'whisper of its wonders'. [*] Certain places become well-known because of their connection with a particular deed, event or personality. In South Rajasthan's Sirohi district, the rising peak of Mt. Abu has become world famous for its outstanding Jain temples. They attract tourists from the four corners of the globe.

Another world-renowned expression of Jain art is the Lunigvasahi temple on Abu, built by Vastupal and Tejpal in the thirteenth century at a cost of millions of rupees. It echoes the grandeur of the Vimalvasahi temple. Tejpal's astute wife Anupama played an important role in urging the temple builders to even greater heights of artistic achievement by rewarding the masons with gold and silver equal in weight to the stone dust that fell as they shaved thin slivers off the stone to refine the work. As a result of her marvellous insight the stone has come alive and this temple has secured a peerless place in the history of architecture. I hold Anupama in high esteem and give credit to her for these marvels of the art of stone carving. Her generosity has brought acclaim to the religion of Jainism and world recognition to Indian art.

[*] *Rajputane Ke Jain Veer*, Ayodhya Prasad, p.330

Rajasthan's Proud Past

If in Sanskrit the earth is called the *Ratnagarbha* (womb of precious stones), then in Rajasthan you can see the glints of this treasure-trove in its Jain heroes - each as magnificent as the *Kaustubh* jewel. A large number of temples, shrines and other monuments of a very high standard were built due to the influence of the Jains on the royal dynasties. Literary culture too made noteworthy strides as a result of their efforts. Kailash Chandra Jain says that Jain writers in Rajasthan made a very important contribution to the magnification of Hindi literature[*]. They also wrote in the languages of Dingal and Braj. He adds that wherever the Jain community settled in Rajasthan, hospitals, animal sanctuaries and other relief institutions could also be found. [**] Compassion and empathy for the welfare of all sentient beings is still the credo of many Rajasthani families.

South India, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa are areas where Jainism's star, once in the ascendant, if not totally extinguished yet, is much dimmed. Only in Rajasthan and Gujarat does Jainism still play a prominent role, and the sheen from its silken cloth pervade the surroundings with a golden glow. Many Jains emulated Bhamashah and gave their all in the struggle for independence from British rule. Who does not know about the patriotic devotion of Agra's Seth Achalsingh, the pride of the Jains? Who has not heard about that leading light of the Jain community, Ahmednagar's Shri Kundanmal Firodia, who devoted his entire life to the national cause? When these noble qualities of helping others and caring for them are passed on to the younger generation today, in the simplest and most appealing way, then Rajasthan's proud example and glorious tradition will be kept up.

Impact of Jain Culture on Gujarat

Like Rajasthan, the diadem of Jainism has long adorned Gujarat too. There has been a continuous influence of Jain teachings and precepts in the region. Arishtanemi, the twenty second Tirthankar, once hallowed the earth of Saurashtra with his presence. If I set aside even for a moment the

[*] *Jainism in Rajasthan* Kailash Chandra Jain, p 233
Ibid, p 236



Placing the 'Siddhahaimavyakaran' in the howdah of an elephant

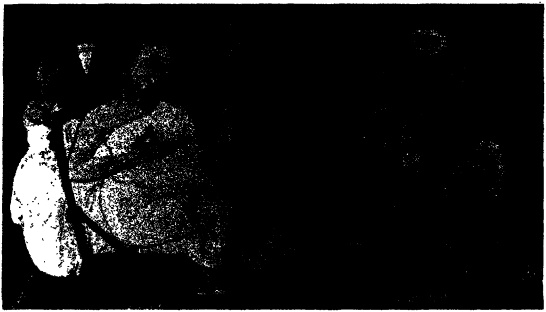
phenomenal contribution made in that ancient era, and concentrate on the events taking place in the centuries since Christ, I find that Gujarat is eternally in Jainism's debt. The constant presence of the Jains and their tireless efforts have made Gujarat the focal point for the belief in and practice of vegetarianism in India today. Lokmanya Tilak wrote, 'The custom of animal protection and non meat-eating in Gujarat was due to the influence of Jainism'.[1] He writes of his respect for Jainism's non-violent tenets, and says that it was the impact of the Jains that made Brahmins refrain from using intoxicants or animals for sacrifice in their rituals. From then on the religious observances were conducted substituting flour 'statues' for the live animals.[2] It is only through love for ahimsa and truth that Jainism has grown and prospered, and standing by these principles, it will continue to hold its own.

Acharya Hemchandra: A Prominent Patron of Culture and Politics

Under the guidance of Acharya Hemchandra, the widespread work of animal protection was carried out in twelfth century Gujarat. The impact of his deeds was so great that nothing could expunge it from the pages of history. I don't know whether to begin by praising him, or his disciple, because in this particular case guru and disciple were indiscrete.

The affection between Guru Hemchandra and his disciple Maharaja Siddharaj Jaysingh was such that the gem of Jain literature, the *Siddhahaimavyakaran*, is jointly named after them. The Maharaja was totally devoted to Acharya Hemchandra and during his reign Gujarat prospered and experienced a burgeoning spirituality. Under the guidance of his guru, Siddharaj did all he could for the welfare of his kingdom. Though he was a follower of the Shaiv religion, the influence of Acharya Hemchandra on him was so powerful, that he made a proclamation banning the slaughter of animals on one of the most important holy festivals of the Jains, *Paryushan*. This then became the practice at every Jain religious celebration. Siddharaj showed his love for his guru by gilding all the spires of the Jain temples in his

[1] *Pacifism and Jainism*, Sukhlal Sanghvi, p 15
[2] *Vishwa Ko Jain Dharma Ki Den*, Edited By Nirmal Kumar, p 23



Acharya Hemchandra teaches King Kumarpal service to humanity

kingdom, and removing as many obstacles as he could to the propagation of Jainism.

Kalikalsarvagya Acharya Hemchandra was an effective administrator as well as a great literary figure. The *Siddhahaimavyakaran*, a beautifully crafted grammar book which he wrote at Siddharaj's request, greatly enriched Gujarati literature and is still very popular in schools and colleges. Only in Gujarat have I seen this 'offering' to Saraswati - the goddess of learning - honoured in such a particular fashion. The grammar book, carefully placed in the howdah of an elephant, was welcomed by the King into his kingdom. Three hundred scholars then sat and made copies of the book. It contains 8 chapters, and 3,566 verses, and has been accorded the same respect as the grammars of Panini, and Shaktayan. It has found a place of honour in libraries from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.

Trishashtishalakapurush is Hemchandra's excellent creation of the biographies of sixty three great personalities of the Jain religion. In each instance it provides a background of the cultural consciousness from which these 'characters' arose. The poetic description of the lives of these people touches the heart of the reader. Those who love learning about history find that it contains much useful information on the subject, as well as a variety of topics such as religion, philosophy and literature. Which other works of Acharya Hemchandra should I mention? They are legion; if I start describing them all, it will take me from here to eternity! I will just say that he wrote over 35 million couplets, and inscribed forevermore the name of the Jains on the 'forehead' of the literature of Gujarat.

Kumarpal : An Ideal Jain King

Acharya Hemchandra's influence on Gujarat's royal dynasties continued for many years. Kumarpal, another of Gujarat's kings, was also filled with devotion for Acharya Hemchandra. He built thirty two Jain temples as an expiation for the 'crime' of once eating meat with his thirty two teeth when he was a young man! If the king turns away from the religion so will the subjects. One does not need to meet a king to know

a king; one will see the perfect mirror image of the king in his people. It is obvious from this assertion that the subjects of Kumarpal must have emulated the virtues of their king.

A very special place is reserved in my hall of fame for Raja Kumarpal who, before becoming an ambassador for Jainism, took the twelve vows of a *shravak*. He desisted from sacrificing animals, waging war, or perpetrating violence of any kind; he banned gambling and the drinking of alcohol, ended capital punishment, defended the weak, protected the honour of women and thus followed the Tirthankars' teachings in a truly practical manner. He established twenty one *gyan bhandars* or libraries to nurture and promote literature and arranged for the copying of the Jain *Agamas*, the *Yoga-Shastras* of Hemchandra, and many other literary works. All these events are sharply etched in my memory and I present them here so that you too may share my overflowing delight in this exceptional king.

My aim in writing about Kumarpal is to show that he is not a figment of my imagination – he is the perfect embodiment of my image of a great king; all the qualities of an ideal Jain king come alive in him. In the opinion of Colonel Todd, Kumarpal held the precepts of Jainism in high esteem and followed them with total devotion and made Gujarat an ideal Jain state."

Offering an Entire Kingdom as *Gurudakshina*

As I have said before, Gujarat is a place which glows with the conscientiousness of its Jain aspirants; it is the stronghold of many Jain royal families, a fabulous gold mine iridescent with Jain personalities. In fact it seems as if the wonders of Gujrat are never-ending. Vanraj Chavada's son Vimalmantri built the spectacular Vimalvasahi Temple on the summit of Mt. Abu. He inherited the tradition of giving large donations to religious causes from his father. It is worth knowing that Vanraj Chavada had offered up his entire kingdom as *gurudakshina*, in a humble gesture of devotion to his guru, Jain Acharya Sheelgunasuriji. However, because

Jain-Gaurav Samriyan, Shri Manmal Jain Martand, p.339

of his natural detachment from owning anything, which is the hallmark of Jain *shramans*, Sheelgunasuriji gently refused the offer. Nevertheless he honoured the devotion of his disciple and inspired him to build many magnificent Jain temples, and let it be understood that he would accept their creation as his *gurudakshina*.

Vastupal and Tejpal : Living the Jain Ideal

Gujarat's story would not be complete without the mention of Vastupal and Tejpal. There were many able Jain *shravaks* during the Middle ages but Vastupal stood out as a shining model amongst them all. He was a great ambassador for Jainism and spent an incomparable amount of money on enhancing the impact of Jainism in the region. Muni JinaVijayji said, 'History does not record anyone who matched Vastupal's contribution to Jainism.' " I myself have never seen anyone else who served his own faith with such utter conviction, whilst also respecting other religions. I was astonished to see how Vastupal spent thousands of rupees on the making of an exquisitely carved marble *toran* for sending to the holy city of Mecca as a pious offering. The *toran* was a fine example of the delicate sculpture of Gujarat in the Middle Ages.


Ministers Vastupal and Tejpal

There wasn't a temple, holy place or educational institution in India during that period that Tejpal and Vastupal did not endow. Due to their dedication and vision,

* *Pramukh Aitihasik Jain Purush Aur Mahilayen*, Dr Jyoti Prasad Jain, p.236

their hometown, Dholka, became one of the best centres of learning in Gujarat. You might have heard that the Goddesses of Learning and Wealth are seldom seen cohabiting. However, if by chance they meet up and are joined by the Goddess of Power, the Sun of Fortune shines on their rare meeting. As far as I can remember Vastupal is the only 'lamp' in the history of the Jains, whose unwavering flame symbolises the 'confluence' of this radiant threesome. The title of 'Saraswati Kanthabharan' was conferred on him because of his extraordinary command of poetry. Precious jewels like Vastupal have greatly beautified the earth and added lustre to Jainism and for this I honour them unreservedly.

Jagdu Shah : Guardian of the World

I still shiver when I recall the painful memories of the terrible famine that occurred in Magadh a few centuries after the nirvana of Tirthankar Mahavir. This dreadful event was one of the many reasons for Jainism's decline in Bihar. The other famine which horrified me happened in Gujarat in 1271 *Vikram Samvat*. However, Gujarat was saved from its worst ravages because of the stance taken by the modest philanthropist Jagdu Shah. With deep compassion, he tried to eradicate the suffering brought about by hunger, thirst and lack of the basic amenities, by giving his own wealth to others. He distributed grain and clothing over a period of three years, opened one hundred and twelve charitable homes and saved countless lives. For this unselfish act he was given the title 'Guardian of the World'.

Jainism believes that the essential characteristic of a soul is to help and support others. Nowadays I sit silently in large meetings of religious aspirants and hear many complex theories about what it means to be a spiritual person. If anyone were to ask me, I would say that Jagdu Shah was a truly spiritual person, a man who found his purpose in life by helping humanity. Jagdu Shah deserves much honour; it is difficult to find another person like him – another such example of dedication to serving others. He had the

clear vision of his religion, as he put the welfare of others before his own. Whenever I think about this charming disciple of Jainism, I am filled with bliss at seeing how compassionate he was, and it seems that the bright green leaves of his unstinting giving were never touched by the frosts of winter.

Dada Guru Jindatta Suri

The glorious sun of Jainism in Gujarat was at its peak during the twelfth century. Reflected in its dazzling light, brilliant stars rose, one after the other, in the Jain firmament, to further advance religious and cultural progress. One of the illustrious names on the list of epoch-making personalities was Dada Guru Jindatta Suriji. This bright star arose in the city of Dholkanagar and the whole of western and northern India was bathed in his refulgent light. The prudent Jindatta Suriji propagated ethical integrity and became a symbol of holiness. Famous as 'First Dada Guru', he played a significant role in spreading Jainism to the masses, and his triumph was that he brought about an incredible increase in the number of Jain followers in Marvad, Sindh, Gujarat and other neighbouring provinces. Had other acharyas emulated him, the Jain population might have reached hundreds of millions by now. I can testify to the fact that his success in increasing the Jain following was unrivalled. However, the picture would not be complete if I did not mention the third Dada Guru, Jinkushal Suriji, who was of the same lineage as Jindatta Suriji. He showed the same unflagging spirit by converting fifty thousand people to the Jain religion in Sindh, then a province of the Moghuls.

Shri Heervijay Suri : Moghul Samrat Pratibodhak

It is a well-known historical fact that, after the Moghul's conquest of India, Jainism, as well as all other indigenous Indian religions, suffered a great setback. It was against this background that Jain Acharya Shri Heervijay Suri became a spiritual guide to the Moghul Emperor, Akbar – a truly significant event. He showed that with wisdom and a broad vision of life, a sage of one religion can impress people of another faith and win their praise and support. His



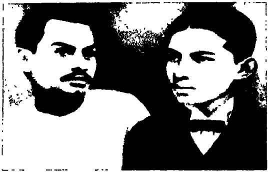
King Akbar welcomes Acharya Hiravijay Suriji

influence on Akbar during the sixteenth century was so great that Heervijay Suri became renowned as *Akbar-Pratibodhak* – 'wisdom-giver' to Emperor Akbar. The teachings of Acharya Heervijay Suri made an impact on Akbar and he vowed not to hunt during the festival of *Paryushan* (Jain religious festival held during *Chaturmas*).

The Emperor wanted to honour the Acharya with many gifts, but since looking after the welfare of all living things is the greatest gift a true Jain *shraman* can have, the Acharya asked that prisoners be released, caged birds be set free and animal slaughter be ended during the eight days of *Paryushan*. All this was graciously granted by Akbar. The curtailing of violence by a Moghul emperor at the instruction of a Jain sadhu was totally unprecedented. Like Acharya Heervijay, his learned disciples also maintained their influence for a long period in the Moghul court, thus securing protection for animals, the ending of the tax on Jain pilgrims, improved security for holy places and the building of new Jain temples. This highlights the incomparable nature of the deeds performed by the Jain *shramans*.

Shrimad Rajchandra: A Man of Great Spirituality

The world famous philosopher Khalil Gibran said : 'Make the heart like a mighty cedar. Even if the branches break, the tree remains. It can grow again and gain new strength.' If Indian culture, religion and philosophy is like a beautiful dense forest, then the Jains are the mighty cedars growing in it, because Jainism is perennial, able to renew itself again and again. After some period of a religion lying fallow, a great man always rises up and kindles a new light on the horizon, and brings a new vigour to it. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, one such man rose like a mighty cedar. He left an indelible impression on me. Shrimad Rajchandra lit up the horizon and became a symbol for the devotion of thousands of people. This great personality of the spiritual world brought such an aura of radiance to the age, that the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, was inspired by him and regarded him as his spiritual guru. This Jain layman,



Shrimad Rajchandra and Gandhiji

awakened to all the aspects of his inner world, was like a lotus blossoming in the water. It is one thing to hold certain ideals and entirely another thing to live according to their lights. Shrimad Rajchandra not only lived out in his own life all the ideals of Jainism, he also taught thousands of others to do the same.

The Philanthropy of Jain Society

Sometimes slow, sometimes fast, yet ever rolling onward, this is the story of the glory of the Jain religion which has been running for thousands of years, scaling new peaks of honour. In 1897 an authoritative English writer said that half of the commerce of India was in Jain hands and that their philanthropy was on the same scale.[*] The nation now enjoys many institutions endowed by Jains - schools, universities, research institutes, student hostels, scholarships, libraries, publications in different vernacular languages, hospitals, animal hospitals, cow sanctuaries, orphanages, women's sanctuaries and other relief homes. Though for many reasons the number of Jains has fallen, their philanthropic deeds exceed, in proportion to their numbers, those done by other communities.[**]

Nation-wide, even today, several facets of life show the influence of Jainism. I have spoken of Buddhism's success in becoming a world religion, yet it is noteworthy that Jainism was far more successful in maintaining itself in its place of origin. Whereas Buddhism has totally vanished from the land where it began, Jainism is still growing by means of the astute efforts of some of its followers. Sometimes sunshine can be piercing and strong, sometimes its light can be weak or sluggish and sometimes

* *Pramukh Aitihasik Jain Purush Aur Mahilayen* Dr Jyoti Prasad Jain, p 371
** *Ibid*, p 372

we can't even see it at all. But those forests and groves of trees, where even the tiniest rays of sunshine can break through and warm the surroundings, will keep on growing and gaining strength. In the same way, wherever the influence of Jain *shramans* has been felt, however fleeting, Jainism has remained alive.

Jainism is the coral isle of my inner sea, which is why I sing such eulogies about it. The story of Jainism that I have presented to you is memorable indeed, but there is a shadow over my paradise island - despite all their virtues and praiseworthy deeds in many areas, the number of Jains has not increased by any appreciable amount. We all know that Jainism's spiritual profundity and universal altruism has inspired many to live their lives in accordance with its teachings, but the fact remains that Jain acharyas and *shramans* never pressurised those who came to them for guidance to convert to the Jain religion. True, countless people have received help in understanding life's real purpose, not to speak of help with life's other basic necessities, but in return for this help no-one has been asked, even by lay people, to accept or observe the commandments of Jainism.

Jainism Loses its Hold

Jainism has held up its *shramans* as its heroes for the last 2,600 years. They have been at the helm during the triumphant journey of Jainism's expansion. Even today the duty of protecting and nurturing Jainism falls on their powerful shoulders. In the future too they will remain the axis in the wheels of the chariot of progress, as they are the pivotal point for the development of society. This community of renunciants in its excellence has opened the gate for universal progress, given me the invaluable gift of its divine personalities and enriched me greatly. Why go further? I have just presented you with a stupendous composition of a thousand golden years of Jain history in South India, a symphony sung with the purest of notes by the Jain *shramans*, which still echoes in my memory. However, I have to add, that pleased as I am about the accomplishments of the Jain *shramans*, I am disappointed as well because it was their own short-sightedness and laxity

that was responsible for Jainism's later decline in South India.

Some historians say that the rise of the Shaiv-Nayanars and the Vaishnav-Alvars was responsible for the fall of Jainism in South India, but I believe that in reality there was a dearth of charismatic acharyas capable of bringing religion and politics together. Jainism decayed because the Jain *shramans* lacked the ability necessary to win royal favour, or provide strong leadership for their own religious order. They were not adaptable enough to the changing environment to spread the message of Jainism effectively among the masses. Indifferent to the challenge posed by the growing influence of other religions, and dogged by a tendency to turn inwards, the *shramans* ended by increasingly insisting on the purely private struggle for their own spiritual liberation. This was what ended Jainism's spiritual supremacy in South India.

Shri Ramaswami Ayyangar has said : 'Jainism's once popular teachings became so strict and its observances so severe, that they became practically impossible to follow.'[17] The severity with which Jainism's canon law was interpreted made its observances increasingly isolationist and obscure, transforming it from an object of piety to one of derision. Now royal patronage, which had once been the domain of the Jains, began to be conferred on Shaivites and Vaishnavites. It is a well-accepted truth that when royal patronage is withdrawn from a particular religion and the ruler actively opposes it, the religion goes into a decline.

Whatever anyone may say, I believe that if the tradition of having acharyas imbued with vital spiritual energy had been kept up, then no force would have been strong enough to get rid of Jainism in South India.

Why is the Land of Bihar Bereft ?

Though much is expected from the Jain sadhus and sadhvis, in the present context I will limit myself to a request that they emulate the deeds of the great Tirthankars. They should look to their splendid past for inspiration - the past where the glorious sun

Dakshin Bharat Mein Jain Dharma, Pt. Kailash Chandra Shastri, p 18

of the Jain religion brightened up even the darkest night with its dazzling light. In order to add to the illustrious pages of Jain history, Jain *shramans* must actively work in the provinces, where the spark of Jainism has never wavered.

Bihar, the land of the twenty two Tirthankars, is virtually bereft of Jain *shramans* and their influence. There is practically no Jain community in the province today. Animal sacrifices are carried out at the very site where Mahavir was born, and also near the hallowed area of his attainment of nirvana. Bihar, the place of the *samavasarans* (a holy assembly of the Jinas), is badly neglected, and their glorious memory is now dimmed. Sammet Shikharji, the holy place where twenty two Tirthankars gained nirvana, is not looked after properly. It has become a subject for dispute among the different sects. If the Jains show such indifference to the fate of their pilgrimage spots, how can Jainism flourish? What will be the future of these holy places?

I have alluded to the manner in which the Buddhist monks have, on their powerful shoulders, lifted Buddhism up to the status of a world religion. There are probably only a few countries in the world that Buddhism has not penetrated and then attracted the masses with its ideas. I have said that Buddhism has declined in India, but the presence of their historical sites, stupas and other archaeological artefacts reflects their strong past. Buddhist monks from other nations are taking energetic steps to protect their wealth of history in India. In Bihar too, they work to protect and glorify their holy sites.

If the Jain community wants to see its religion grow and develop again, I entreat its members to go to the different provinces and scatter the fragrance of their strength and the sweetness of their presence everywhere, so that Jain society, through its inexhaustible vitality, can create a new chapter of Jainism where a glorious past and promising future can meet.

Conclusion

I have been almost overwhelmed in

bringing to you the power and radiance of some of the jewels stored in my limitless memory. I have simply tried to tell you what I have observed over the centuries. Yet in presenting these facts of Jain history to you, I accept with sorrow the reality that a religion, once so venerable and splendid, has now so little in keeping with the glories of its past.

If anyone asks me why I am so eager for the world-wide spread of Jainism, I would answer that the bequest of the Tirthankars not remain confined to one community, but be spread to all humanity, that Jain society develop its culture and ideas, and I would like the participation of Jains in administration, defence and other national programmes to be enhanced. I also want educational and other social welfare activities run by the Jains to reach unparalleled heights. The life of Tirthankar Mahavir was lived for the welfare of all, so his teachings should also be used for the development of all. I am delighted to say that Jains have followed these precepts over the centuries; history bears it out, and this is what you have witnessed in previous pages.

Jainism has had such great prophets and such glorious antecedents; why then does the light of Jainism sometimes seem to have been dimmed, and the religion appear to languish? Why does the Jain community sometimes seem to take less and less of a stance on issues like the protection of animals, the ecological balance, and the eradication of poverty and violence? The idea of ahimsa seems to be more of a theory than a practice. The minute somebody brings up the subject of the Jain religion, whether it be in India or any other place in the world, people immediately ask : "Is it the name of a race, an art or a cult ?" Then in order to explain what it is, people say: "It's like Buddhism; it originated in India." If a contemporary religion like Buddhism can make its mark on the honour-roll of world religions, then why can't Jainism?

To find out the reasons, I journeyed back through the splendour of Jainism. I wanted to inquire as to where and when in its glorious past, these ideas about a withdrawal

from active life had begun to take root. When I started exploring, all its wondrous chapters opened up to me, and in my rapture at its uniqueness, I delved into its depths again and again. I found to my surprise that in fact Jain history always reflects the taking of action – nowhere could I find any trace of Jains taking a 'passive stance'.

It is clear to me that the religion of the Tirthankars was not solely concerned with the individual's search for liberation from karmic bondage, neither are its activities aimed at finding pleasure and happiness in the 'other world'. Instead, it is concerned with promoting universal welfare and experiencing liberation or 'heaven' here on earth. Liberation is not a special place, it is a state of inner bliss and to chase after it, in a total withdrawal from all action and responsibility to the neglect of society's needs, is a delusion. Jainism teaches us to know the art of living, and the person with that knowledge will automatically attain the greater overall objective of heaven or liberation. To live well on this earth, the balance between *pravrutti* and *nivrutti* needs to be maintained. In every *pravrutti* – every action, there should be *nivrutti* – a detachment from that action; and in every *nivrutti* – withdrawal from worldly life, there should be *pravrutti* – actions to better other people's lives. This is the *anekantvad* of Mahavir, this is his *syadvad*. Jainism's followers should take up the victorious flag of theory and practice, action and contemplation, the striving for omniscience as well as the selfless engagement in the here and now, and walk the path of religion.

More than 2,600 years of glorious history reflect the truth that whenever there was 'movement' in the Jain tradition, whenever it combined its spiritual dynamism with an active concern for the welfare of all, it remained pure like a swift-flowing stream. However, when it showed itself tardy in adapting to situations, reluctant to change with the times or was detached from concern for the world - all in the name of tradition and the narrow interpretation of the law - its divine message, once rippling out like a large clear lake, has shrunk to the

size of a small muddy pond where many insects and worms bore into it and live off its vigour. Jainism has always placed emphasis on working for universal welfare - that is its foundation, its glory and its halo of divinity.

On the auspicious occasion of Veerayatan's Silver Jubilee, I have tried to reveal some glimpses of Jainism's glories. This was an almost impossible task because, unlike limited words, the splendour of Jainism is limitless. However, I wanted to commemorate the event by paying my tribute in this way, since I feel that a common thread runs right through from the era of the Tirthankars to present day Veerayatan. Veerayatan is the living emblem of 2,600 years of Jain excellence and experience. Not only is it a holy temple of ancient wisdom, it is a living icon of Tirthankar Mahavir's commitment to universal welfare. Every corner is filled with service, worship, education and it seems that the flowers of art, culture, love, and fellow feeling perfume the surroundings here. History's tales of grandeur have come alive on this spot.

At this very promising moment I call on you to draw inspiration from the great record of Jain history and, guided by it, push forward the swift chariot of religion with determination and energy towards that horizon where a golden future is eager to welcome you with the lamp of success in her hand.

In order to remain healthy, it is necessary that mind and body both remain internally and externally pure. Compared to that of the body, purity of the mind is even more important. The success of a healthy and uplifted life is dependent upon our state of mind, because our body is influenced by our state of the mind. Therefore, a healthy state of mind is much more critical than mere physical well-being. If the mind is contaminated in some way or other, the body too will be affected by this change. The shadow of the mind's inner turmoil is always reflected in the body.

Religion is an expression of the pure and sublime state of the human heart . Our physical being is certainly able to carry out the external rites of any sect, but religion is the essence of our inner depths; it cannot be performed externally. When we try to measure it in terms of external rites and rituals and the 'do's and donts' of a code of conduct, we delude ourselves.

Although the flute has many holes in it, it can still sing sweetly. Can't you at least raise a smile - even if you are sad or distressed? Look, the lacklustre sun of the evening is shining again in the morning with a new hope and a new light in the east!

Sometimes great illusions are harboured under the banner of revolution. We have a clear example in front of us at present. Every day we see protest marches, arson, riots, strikes, shut-downs and sit-ins. These are nothing but instances of a mass delusion which in this modern age is deceiving human minds under the guise of revolution. True revolution does not lie in inciting people, fanning the flames of their discontent, or making them agitated and full of tension. True revolutionaries are those who open up new horizons of thinking, infuse new feelings in men's hearts, generate new possibilities, unveil new dimensions to life, and guide people in the right direction.


Choose

The Saint who Personifies
Wellbeing for All -
Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muni ji Maharaj

Upadhyaya Yasha

War can be Non-Violent

Scriptures Guide Life

Pearls of Wisdom

Amar Muni

The Saint who Personifies Wellbeing for All
Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj



There are few personalities in this world whose impact is so universal, and whose greatness is such, that they defy all definition. The nature of their charisma cannot be encompassed in mere metaphors or other figures of speech. Neither intellect nor imagination can fully grasp their super-splendid spiritual being, nor can words ever truly express their worth. An entire age is blessed by their presence, but all means of expression fall short of fully describing their divine grace. Such radiant beings are not bound by any limitations, and like a lamp upon being lit, they shed their luminescence all around.

That great sage, the revered Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj, the embodiment of the consciousness of his time, is such a personality and it often seems that even after having spoken at length about him, so much is still left unsaid. The character of this visionary of Veerayatan was a rainbow of many a distinctive hue. He was graced with an all-penetrating yet ever-peaceful look, a logical and precise mind, a truth-seeking temperament, an imperturbable resolve in the face of adversity, total dedication to attaining inner purity and a vision that gave a much deeper meaning to a concept like 'religious tolerance'. He had a face that constantly radiated contentment and good cheer, and possessed an eagerness to progress on the path of duty with the well-being of all creatures at heart. One is enchanted at every turn by the beauty of these his inner qualities.

Future generations will marvel at the fact that a great saint was born in the twentieth century who, by the example of his life, gave new meaning to words like 'monk', 'saint', 'ascetic' and 'sage'. The poetic brilliance of his speech stirred his listeners to the depths of their being and changed their lives for the better. So electrifying were his writings that they created 'thought-quakes' in the minds of his readers. His thoughts, words and deeds were one with the divine and a constant 'shower' of affection from his eyes transformed animosity into amity.

Venerable Shri Amar Munıji Maharaj was born on November 1st, 1902, into an ordinary farming family in the village of Godha near Narnaul in the State of Haryana. No-one knows what inspired his father Lal Singh and his mother Chameli Devi to name their son Amar Singh. It is said that favourable opportunities naturally become available to those people whom destiny decides to elevate to greatness and glory. Even an ordinary occasion becomes an extraordinary opportunity. One day young Amar Singh was visiting Narnaul with his father when he met Acharya Shri Motiramji, the spiritual stalwart of the Sthanakvasi Jain community. The Acharya Shri immediately perceived the hidden potential of the boy. Just then his father Lal Singhji said, "Guru Maharaj, he is the lamp that lights up your devotee's family." Upon hearing this, the Acharya Shri retorted : "Fool, he is no lamp. He is the sun. One day he'll spread the light of religion all over the world. Come, leave him with me." The father honoured his Gurudev's command. So at the age of fifteen, adolescent Amar Singh became Amar Muni, the disciple of Shri Prithvi Chandraji Maharaj.

Later, talking about the incident, Pujya Gurudev Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj said: "I did not select my guru. At that stage I had neither the clarity of vision nor the maturity of thought to recognise a true guru. However, my guru, with his divine perspicacity, picked me and awakened the godhead that lay dormant within me."

Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji had an

intense thirst for knowledge. He had a sharp intellect and a powerful reasoning ability. He was 'inquisitiveness incarnate'. His instructors were amazed and his gurus delighted by his receptivity. Gurudev's poetic talent reflected not only his great learning but also his inborn wizardry with words. His voice was sonorous and his oratory brilliant. As he gained in stature, Gurudev Amar Muniji naturally became the focus of attention for the entire Jain community.

The patriotic wave of freedom-fighting that swept the country touched Amar Muniji too. He began to write songs and poems about nationalism and independence. These revolutionary verses became so popular that the Maharaja of Patiala, under pressure from the British Government, tried to ban them but this created such a furore that they had to give in. Gradually Muni Shriji's poetry, filled with devotion and love, inspired the entire Jain community and people began to affectionately address him as *Kaviji* (the poet).



Upadhyaya Shriji was like the ancient sages and the holy fakirs; like them he led a contented and solitary life of detachment from all things. In unfavourable situations he remained steady like an insurmountable wall, but to the common man he was a messiah of compassion. He was a self-made man; his character was honed by constant learning and experience. He often used to quote an ancient verse: *yadi pathi vipathē kā yad vrajāmaḥ sa panthāḥ* – 'the traveller on the path of truth creates his path himself'. The routes to realisation are not readymade; they need to be laid out and he who has this knowledge opens up a new track wherever he treads. Following in his footsteps makes even the roughest road smooth.

The dignity of one who searches for the truth lies not in clinging to outdated observances, but in creating a sense of openness within which people can develop their lives along the right path. Amar Muniji's revolutionary ideas moved every Jain heart and mind. Upadhyaya Shriji infused a new dynamism into the thought patterns and processes that had become stagnant. He was never afraid to voice his thoughts; he opposed dogmatism and was an advocate of adaptability. He always rose above personal interests and fought courageously for his religious order, the welfare of society and humanity as a whole.



He never gave up until the desired result was achieved. This was why the intellectuals and the common people, the young and the old, all looked up to him. Even his opponents could not question his truthfulness or find a blemish on his spotless character.

He spent many years organising the scattered sadhus and sadhvis of the Sthanakavasi order under the name 'Shraman-sangh'. He instilled in its members a renewed strength and vitality, revamped the codes of conduct and imbued their education and spiritual development with a new energy. Despite all his accomplishments he preferred to stay anonymous. He believed in performing his duties and then leaving the accolades for others.

Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji was wonderfully creative. He wrote more than a hundred inspirational works including articles, poems, essays and critical reviews. His topics were varied and his treatment of them interesting and uplifting, and enriched by his philosophy of life, they provide a highly practical guide to those aspiring to

the spiritual path. His contribution to the development of society was not only revolutionary but also epoch-making. Enraptured by his wisdom and erudition, Jain society endowed him with the title of 'Upadhyaya'. The University of Agra awarded him the honorary degree of 'D.Litt.' In recognition of his service to the nation, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, conferred upon him the title of ***Rashtrasant*** (National Saint). And in all this approbation, it seems as if the awards themselves, because they adorned his glorious person, were vouchsafed greater worth.

He spent a *chaturmas* (a four-month period), in the Saptparni cave on the Vaibhargiri Hills in the Rajgir region. There he led the life of an ascetic, observing a vow of silence and spending many hours in meditation. He also subjected himself to long periods in the scorching heat of the sun. Onlookers were bewildered at seeing that a saint of such high scholastic ability could also follow the path of meditation and the austere life. This spiritual being, who always spoke about self-discovery, did not himself shirk from undertaking even the most severe practice of *tapa*. Upadhyaya Shriji continued his meditation undaunted, surrounded by lions, tigers and other wild beasts. It was as if the divine rays of friendship made the atmosphere overflow with love and fearlessness. During this period of contemplation, Mahavir's message of welfare for all, that had once echoed through these very mountain ranges and awakened a spiritual consciousness in many people, stirred Gurudev from within. It was in those blessed moments that Pujya Gurudev made an iron resolve; he decided to reach out to each and every human heart with Mahavir's message of compassion – a message that is today sadly confined to a relatively small number of people. A promise like his, made with total sincerity and commitment, can never go unfulfilled. Today Veerayatan symbolises the vow made by that pious saint.

Ordinary beings dream in their sleep, but great men and saintly souls dream even while they are awake. Nurtured by

innumerable sincere and dedicated hands, Pujya Gurudev's dream of Veerayatan has become a fountainhead of inspiration from which streams of service, education and spiritual cultivation flow in all directions. The call that came from Gurudev is today giving new vitality to people from all walks of life.

The manifestation of Gurudev's vision, Veerayatan, holds many promising possibilities for the future. It is like a shining pillar illuminating not only the East but every other part of the world as well. The small seed sown by those holy hands has today developed into an enormous tree of universal welfare with all-enveloping branches of love, compassion and friendship for everyone.

Upadhyaya Yasha

War can be Non-Violent

The Jain religion is synonymous with non-violence (ahimsa). Guarding and respecting living beings and their environment - as well as foregoing all but absolutely unavoidable harm to sentient beings - is non-violence. Actions are necessary in our lives, and some violence or harm is inherent in every action, be it only dravya-himsa (external or physical violence). To deny the sanctity of life and deliberately harm innocent beings is something that Jainism categorically rejects. That is why Jainism opposes nuclear testing with all its might, as it is ruinous of the biosphere and could destroy life as a whole. Though a powerful proponent of non-violence, Jainism nevertheless does not allow injustice or atrocious deeds of any kind to flourish in society as a whole; moreover, side-stepping retaliation to any outrage by hiding behind the banner of non-violence is nothing but cowardice. In fact, responding to brutality and oppression at the right moment is a form of non-violence, because the 'small' violence done today prevents the proliferation of a wider violence tomorrow. There are many misconceptions put about regarding the concept of non-violence in Jainism. In order to refute these errors in interpretation, let us read some of the Munishri's thoughts about the subject.



Discussions about violence and non-violence have been going on since ancient times. Every great thinker to date has examined this issue minutely yet no comprehensive or categorical definition of non-violence or violence has been found, neither has their essence been unequivocally revealed.

Non-violence is the highest pinnacle of Jain philosophy. Every facet of the Jain path of spiritual purification comprises non-violence. Countless religious texts have been written on it, and its every aspect has been analysed in detail.

The important thing to understand about the concept of non-violence is that, so long as there is life, violence is implicit in our every act. We commit violence in walking; there is violence in eating and drinking. There are microscopic creatures on the ground that are obliterated with our every step. Similarly there are tiny creatures suspended in the air, invisible to the naked eye, that are destroyed as our bodies move about. Our every breath kills some little creature. In every organ of our body, in our very blood, flesh and bones and in all our bodily fluids, a myriad microbes live and die by the second. In this situation we need to ask how we can observe the practice of non-violence, and prevent ourselves from committing violence. Jain tradition answers this question in terms of *dravya-himsa* (an external or physical act of violence), and *bhav-himsa* (being violent from within). If the seeker is aware, can discriminate between the two, remains non-violent from within and is totally free of a violent attitude, he will still be called a non-violent person even in the face of *dravya-himsa*. This *dravya-himsa* without *bhav-himsa* is *himsa* (violence) merely in appearance. Such an act of violence does not bring with it the bondage of negative-karma. In this way, since the mind is free of a violent attitude, though *dravya-himsa* has occurred, the practice of non-violence itself remains intact.



There is another aspect to abiding by the religion of non-violence that has to do with determining the 'quantity' of violence and non-violence in any action. Imagine an action in which there is more non-violence than there is violence; this practice falls within the purview of non-violence. If an act of violence today is the means for the establishment of a much greater measure of non-violence in the future, then it too counts as non-violence. On the other hand a small act of non-violence in the present, which has within it the seeds of a much greater measure of violence in the future, must itself count as violence.

The True Form of Ahimsa

When we reflect deeply on this subject we find that there are two types of violence. One is the violence of attack, the other, violence for the purpose of defence. Should both be seen in the same way? No. The violence which is used to put an end to aggression may seem terrible at face value, but it cannot be categorised as violence alone. Imagine an abscess poisoning the body. If a remedy is not speedily administered, the whole body will be poisoned. It is better to amputate a poisonous finger than allow a person to perish. This means that, if the poison of one part of the body is going to affect the whole, then that part should be removed immediately. There is no need to weigh up whether the finger should be cut off or not. Clearly the person has to be saved, for without him the finger would in any case be 'life-less'. In this context, Jain philosophy maintains that a small act of violence to combat or avert a much greater one is a form of non-violence only. It is non-violence because it prevents a greater injury or violence from being done. Though outwardly violent, in reality it is full of mercy and kindness. Its roots are in compassion, as its motivation is the prevention of a greater evil. For this reason Jain philosophy maintains that this sort of defensive or preventative violence is consistent with non-violence and worthy of emulation.

Raja Chetak's Holy War

In order to put the discussion about greater

and lesser violence into perspective, I would like to give as an example the war between Kunik and Raja Chetak. This was a gruesome war which occurred in Tirthankar Mahavir's time. It has been recorded in our religious literature. One of the protagonists was the leader of the famous Vaishali Republic, Raja Chetak, who had taken the twelve vows of a *shravak*. The other was Kunik, the Emperor of Magadh, who attacked Vaishali. What started the war was the issue of the protection of a refugee. Kunik had usurped his younger brother's rights, seized his wealth and deprived him of his independence. The young prince, fearing for his life, fled to Chetak to seek refuge. When Kunik heard what had happened, he sent the following message to Raja Chetak, 'Send my brother back immediately or pay a heavy price for your defiance.' Raja Chetak opted to fight to protect the refugee. A fierce battle ensued and thousands were killed on the battlefield. Raja Chetak himself died heroically.

Now the issue is this : If Raja Chetak had complied with Kunik's demand and sent the young prince back, then Kunik in retribution could have perpetrated any kind of violence on his sibling; be that as it may, only one life would have been affected and thousands of other lives could have been saved. If Raja Chetak had interpreted the concept of violence and non-violence as some people do today, then he might have sent the prince back, or he could have said, "Young Prince, you are here now, but how are we going to protect you? If we try to do this, many of our people might die. To save one life, many will perish and this would be an extremely violent act." But Raja Chetak did not say this. He went to war to protect an innocent refugee and terrible carnage resulted.

Raja Chetak had taken the twelve vows of a *shravak*; his ability to distinguish between violence and non-violence was extremely acute. He had often had the supreme privilege of listening to the discourses of Tirthankar Mahavir himself. He was no ordinary king; he was the democratically elected leader of the Vaishali Republic. In other words, he was one of the greatest

thinkers of his age. He did not try to solve the question of violence and non-violence by the number of lives affected. In this case he could clearly see that the prince was innocent, an asylum seeker. He was not at fault and his rights were being usurped by the cruel tyrant Kunik. The issue was not merely one of the rights of refugees, but that of alleviating the suffering of an innocent and afflicted man. If asylum is refused to such persons and they are turned over to their persecutors, then where will they find shelter?

Imagine a frightened man surrounded on all sides by death. He is desperate for help and, at the end of his tether, he somehow manages to find a powerful individual who he thinks might give him protection. Abruptly he is turned away. He goes to another place and is turned away again. Try to put yourself in his place and imagine what he is suffering. How frantic he must be! Tears flow from his eyes, yet no-one cares to ask: "What is the matter? Why are you crying?" If this happens there is no question of finding any justice in this world. There is no mercy or compassion for the wronged individual. If people like this, who have suffered atrocities at the hands of tyrants, are shunned by those who could give them succour, then what remains of the religion of compassion and non-violence ?

In fact this is one of the most important questions in life. This is not a matter of pitting the life of one man against a thousand lives, nor is it a question of violence committed against a particular individual, or servitude forced upon him. Rather it is a matter of principle. If on the one hand you are 'murdering' a founding principle, whilst on the other you are saving thousands of lives, then the latter is hardly commendable. In other words, murdering a principle is the worst type of murder. If a principle is set aside in this way then the calamity that results will fuel atrocities and injustices for millions of years. If outrages like this were to increase, then the entire order of the world would be at stake.

In this war between Magadh and Vaishali, it is noteworthy that both Chetak and Kunik

took up weapons. Both were responsible for much slaughter and both committed acts of violence. Yet Chetak died a hero's death and ascended to heaven, whereas when Kunik died, he went to hell. Why is it that one war had two such very opposite results. Both took part in the combat and were jointly responsible for it. If they were both partners in this enterprise, why were the fruits of their actions so entirely different? How did this come about? Clearly these two opposite effects have arisen due to an in-depth discriminatory approach towards the understanding of violence and non-violence.

Protecting a refugee is a religious duty because the refugee is in distress and oppressed by injustice. Death is poised like a sword above his head and he is obliged to flee hither and thither to find protection. To defend him is to defend a principle, and to support him is to support an ethical standpoint. To help innocent people who are oppressed or persecuted is the essence of religion. This holds good not only in the Indian tradition but is also accepted by all mankind today as a common ideal. The protection of a refugee is a precept espoused by all who call themselves humanitarians. Raja Chetak followed this ideal and therefore he went to heaven, whereas Kunik fought for the debased ideal of self-aggrandisement, committing vicious acts and hideous injustices against his little brother by depriving him of his rights, and so went straight to hell. Which of them fought on the side of religion? King Chetak fought a religious war and went to heaven. Kunik fought too, but in opposing the religious ideal, went to hell. It is apparent then that questions of violence and non-violence cannot be resolved externally; they can only be solved by inner reflection. The nature of any action is decided by intention, and the measure of himsa and ahimsa should be defined solely upon this intention.

In the administration of justice, a system of punishment is set up to control the growth of acts of atrocious violence, wrongdoing and savagery because if these are not controlled, they will increase day by day. It is absolutely vital to prevent these dreadful

offences, as a small step taken now can stop the spread of these horrifying crimes in the future.

Protection of a Refugee - One Form of Ahimsa

If humanitarianism is not at the root of a religion then that religion becomes mere hypocrisy. True religion cannot forget humanitarianism. Which religion says that we should turn the refugee away from our door or shun the helpless when they entreat us to support them? It is said that he who oppresses others is certainly committing a terrible crime, but he who spurns a refugee who has come to his door, or refuses to relieve his distress, is the perpetrator of the greater sin. Imagine what would happen if a man, at his wits end, comes to you trusting in your protection and benevolence, and you betray that trust. Picture the awful situation he is in. Although endowed with the means to help him, you did nothing; on the contrary, you pushed him out of the door. This kind of treachery is a gréat sin. To deliver someone from fear is truly part of a great religion; to refuse him protection or deny him freedom from fear is a profanation of religion.

The reason for my detailed analysis of this issue is that Jain society has a greater responsibility to practise non-violence in a more discriminating way, as non-violence is at the very root of the Jain religion. Tirthankar Mahavir has distinguished violence from non-violence on the basis of the intentions of the doer. During these wars and acts of violence people are bound to die, but we should not just look at the statistics; more important than the number of the fallen is the motive for the war and the principles that are at stake. What are the intentions of the participants? What are their inner feelings? What do they want to achieve? Rama fights Ravana. Rama's motive is to retaliate against those who commit atrocities against women. He is fighting not only for an individual Sita but for all the wronged 'Sitas' everywhere. Rama is fighting for a principle. On the other hand Ravana is fighting to satisfy his own lust; his wickedness and viciousness are his incentive.

The Pandavas under the leadership of Shri Krishna go to war, but only to regain what is rightfully theirs. On the opposing side, Duryodhan is fighting too but only to gobble up the Pandavas' inheritance. When you ponder on these epic events, you yourself will be able to judge who was right or who was wrong. As I have said before, sometimes the external act of physical violence *(dravya-himsa)* takes place, but the internal intention of violence (*bhav-himsa*) may not be there at all. In fact *bhav-himsa*, the intention of violence, is at the root of violence. In the context of *bhav-himsa* alone we have to see whether or not the small acts of violence, carried out to prevent bigger acts of violence, are really necessary. Sometimes in life certain situations arise when violence is unavoidable, so it becomes obligatory to commit some smaller acts of violence to combat injustice, irreligious acts and atrocious deeds.

Violence is not only violence to someone's body; mental cruelty is also a significant act of violence. Consider a nation enslaved and a people put under an alien yoke - here, it is not only violence to the body but also violence to the mind. In losing their independence people lose their mental and spiritual autonomy, and slavery erodes their inner worth, leaving them like zombies. The religion, traditions and culture of those countries that have lost their independence degenerate swiftly and become like a rotting corpse.

Mahatma Gandhi took the path of non-violent resistance in the struggle for Indian independence but sometimes the oppressor is so cruel and barbaric that this path is of no use at all. Those whose armies slaughter innocent children, rape defenceless women, burn village after village and heap up mountains of skulls are worse than rabid animals. To oppose them with non-violent resistance is pure folly. The question is, what is the appropriate way of combatting such barbarism? From the viewpoint of non-violence, what should be done? Should we take up arms or find some other way? In this situation defence is no offence; it is the only proper course to take, as shown by the example of Kunik and Raja Chetak. Such a

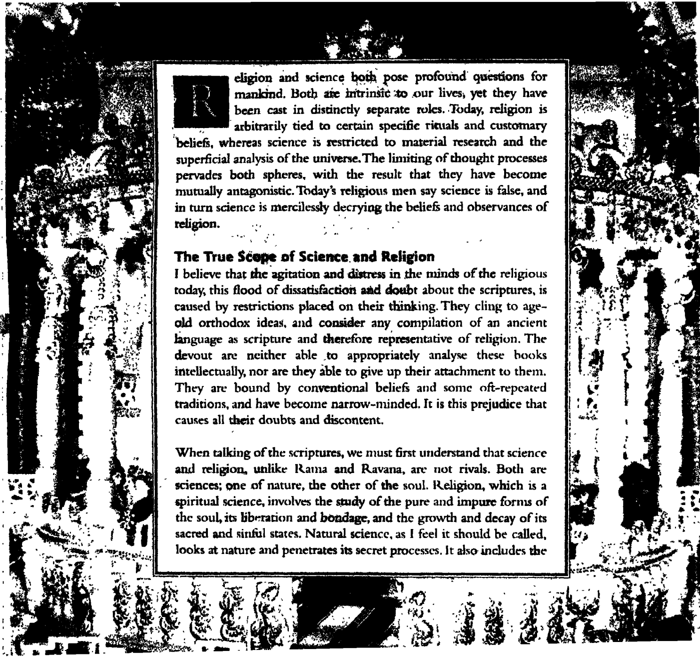
war can be called a war for religion. Like Raja Chetak, those who fall on the battlefield, on the side of right, will gain heaven, whereas those who, like Kunik, are tyrants and oppressors, will go straight to hell. Violence does not just mean killing people; destroying their ethos, and their capacity as independent moral agents is also an act of violence. This is murder of the soul and the unethical practices and social injustices that perpetuate it are violent as well. If these injustices and immoral attitudes are not stopped, then barbarity will sway men's minds. The standard of justice will be debased, and in the foreseeable future, injustice will become the norm and justice will become as much of a myth or legend as the phoenix or the unicorn. From this viewpoint, to oppose such an atrocity is religion. We must oppose injustice - not just taking into account present violence and non-violence, but its likely consequences in the future as well. Present short-sightedness could be the reason for future catastrophe.

Scriptures Guide Life

Scriptures are the voice of the Realised Souls and the foundations of our faith. However, the religious history of the world tells us that no Venerable One has ever written any scriptures himself. Whatever is in the sacred texts has been handed down to us through the oral tradition. The words of the masters have then been written down, and in the process the writers have excluded some of the teachings, and added some thoughts of their own. The works so compiled were accepted as scriptures, and became the focus of human faith. These interpolated passages could not qualify as the truth, and so some of the facts expounded in the scriptures have lost their credibility. But because the scriptures are the object of our faith, the dilemma remains as to whether we can deny or doubt in any way the facts contained in them.

There are many things written in the scriptures. Who will make the distinction between the words of the prophets, and the additions or interpolations, and how is it to be done? This all-important, but most difficult task, can be accomplished only by one who is coloured to the core by faith in the Venerable Ones, whose transcendental wisdom is one with the truth, and whose finely-honed vision can penetrate the outer trappings of words and touch upon their innermost meaning.

Gurudev Shri Amar Muniji clearly possessed all these qualities. By means of his extraordinary intellect, he carried out the praiseworthy task of discerning the voice of Tirthankar Mahavir among the words of the scriptures that to date had commanded people's total faith, and presented the revered words to us. He established the validity of the scriptures by daring to remove the interpolations from them. The arguments he used to distinguish between the scriptures and the other commonplace compilations are presented in the following pages:



Religion and science both pose profound questions for mankind. Both are intrinsic to our lives, yet they have been cast in distinctly separate roles. Today, religion is arbitrarily tied to certain specific rituals and customary beliefs, whereas science is restricted to material research and the superficial analysis of the universe. The limiting of thought processes pervades both spheres, with the result that they have become mutually antagonistic. Today's religious men say science is false, and in turn science is mercilessly decrying the beliefs and observances of religion.

The True Scope of Science and Religion

I believe that the agitation and distress in the minds of the religious today, this flood of dissatisfaction and doubt about the scriptures, is caused by restrictions placed on their thinking. They cling to age-old orthodox ideas, and consider any compilation of an ancient language as scripture and therefore representative of religion. The devout are neither able to appropriately analyse these books intellectually, nor are they able to give up their attachment to them. They are bound by conventional beliefs and some oft-repeated traditions, and have become narrow-minded. It is this prejudice that causes all their doubts and discontent.

When talking of the scriptures, we must first understand that science and religion, unlike Rama and Ravana, are not rivals. Both are sciences; one of nature, the other of the soul. Religion, which is a spiritual science, involves the study of the pure and impure forms of the soul, its liberation and bondage, and the growth and decay of its sacred and sinful states. Natural science, as I feel it should be called, looks at nature and penetrates its secret processes. It also includes the

study of the protection, nourishment and treatment of our body, mind and senses. Both are related to the indivisible and indestructible existence of life. One touches on the outer man, the other concerns itself with his inner being. The field of spiritual science explores the inner consciousness and the substance of the soul. Natural science includes the experimental study of nature and research into it right from the microscopic atom to the vastness of galaxies. Natural science is thus knowledge of the external world, and spiritual science, which deals with the purification and sublimation of the soul, is the knowing of the inner world.

From this viewpoint, natural science and spiritual science are not in competition with each other, but altogether complementary. Science is experiment, where religion is reflection. Science unveils the mystery of the wondrous powers of nature and establishes their existence by experimentation. Spiritual science lends us the wisdom for their constructive utilisation. It also opens up the mind to higher thinking and expunges our consciousness of animosity, baseness and fear. It decides when, where and how scientific discovery should be used. It is spiritual science which provides natural science with a discerning vision. How then can anyone say that natural science and spiritual science stand opposed?

Life today cannot just be involved in the aspiration of the soul, neither can it be wholly taken up with the progress of the external self. Life has two aspects, the inward and the outward. Life is about maintaining the right balance between the two and moving forward. Inner wisdom is necessary so as to avoid division and indiscipline in the outer life. The inner life too is dependent on the outer life for the care of their common vehicle, the body. The material and the spiritual can never be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, a qualitative as well as quantitative value should be given to both in order for us to progress. Only then can life be beautiful, useful and blissful. When I think along these lines, it seems that natural science and

spiritual science are both an integral part of life and, therefore, there can be no question of conflict or contradiction between them.

Today, several beliefs based on religious texts clash with the discoveries of modern science. These beliefs are being called into question and believers are caught in a whirlpool of doubt. So how can we suddenly set aside the age-old religious texts and at the same time brace ourselves for the task of decrying the findings of science? It is this war of ideas that has led to chaos in the field of religion. Wherever age-old conservatism and rigid irrational beliefs triumph, science is seen as false, illusionary and cataclysmic. It is because of this misconception, I believe, that science is assumed to be the opponent of religion, and it is due to the prejudices of religious people and their hatred for anything scientific, that radical modern thinkers have called religion the opiate of the masses - an agent of hypocrisy and falsehood.

If we try to examine the matter more fairly, the reason why scientific discoveries are at odds with religious beliefs will become obvious. In this context we ought to be clear about two things: Firstly, the definition, purpose, and subject matter of the scriptures. Secondly, should we consider whether the *Smritis*, *Puranas*, *Jain-Sutras* and other reference books that go by that name are true to the letter or not.

Books as Scriptures

The first and foremost thing to grasp is that the word 'scripture' is a sacred term, and its influence extensive. By comparison, a book, a treatise or a commentary dealing with religious matters, is much less significant. Some dictionaries may call the two words synonymous, but grammatically they are not. No word can ever be an exact synonym for another; there is always a basic difference in meaning. With this in mind I think of 'book' and 'scripture' as two entirely different words.

The scriptures are essentially expressions of the experience of ultimate reality, consisting of *satyam* (truth), *shivam* (well-being), and *sundaram* (beauty). A book may not

necessarily contain this affirmation of the mobilisation and materialisation of personal and universal welfare. Scriptures are a guide to the perception and performance of the truth, whereas the subject matter of a book is at one remove. Once we learn the difference between the genuine scriptures and other books about religious matters, science and religion will no longer be at loggerheads. One discipline will not dub the other false or 'all-destroying'.

While the intelligentsia shows great indifference towards religious texts, whether *Jain - Sutras*, *Smritis*, or *Puranas*, the devout today also view them with some doubt. The reason lies in our failure to differentiate between books and scriptures or understand the real meaning and worthiness of the latter. We have accepted as scriptures each and every ancient text available in Sanskrit and Prakrit; we have simply lumped them all together, calling them the voice of the Lord. Tying them around our necks like a millstone, we have proclaimed them our sacred texts and, as a consequence, the unchanging truth. We call anyone who speaks against them a liar or an ignoramus. This irrational attitude towards books on religious matters has gripped not only India but the entire religious world. This has been the case for a long time. One can still read about how the adherence of some people to books they called sacred, forced scientists, who dared to question these works, to leave the country. The pages of history are filled with stories of scientists executed for having had the temerity to refute some of the contents of these books.

Books Are Mere Compilations

Those books which are not scriptures, but have come to be thought sacred over the years, have caused great confusion amongst all sorts of religious groups. *Granth* - the word for 'book' in Sanskrit - is etymologically related to the word *granthi*, which means 'knot'. A Jain monk or ascetic is known as *nirgranth*, as there is no knot or binding within him which might hold back the infinite welling up of love, forgiveness, and universal compassion from the depths of his inner being. A knot is tied when things have to be collected or bound

together. Some things taken from here, some things taken from there, are then tied together and joined or yoked. It is through this same type of collection and binding together that some 'holy books' come into being.

The sense that the word *granth* conveys is also found in the Hindi verb *gunthana*, which means plaited together. When a gardener makes a garland, he knots flowers together on a thread or a piece of string. First, he picks up a flower, ties it to the thread, and next he ties a knot. Then he takes up another flower, threads it, ties another knot after it, and so on until the garland is ready. Similarly, a book is a garland of thoughts strung and tied together. Without knots there is no garland. In the same way a *granth* will not be prepared without knotting the collected thoughts together. This implies that a *granth* or book does not necessarily require original thought; it is more a compilation or a compendium, a string of thoughts and beliefs. The same is not true in the case of genuine scripture.

Scripture: Truth's Witness

The scriptures are based upon truth that is self-evident. Truth always touches the consciousness of humanity as a whole, and in our culture, truth is always coupled with welfare. So the vision of truth also reflects a picture of the lifting of the consciousness of the entire universe. Though the material sciences also unveil the truth, they do it from a purely intellectual standpoint. It is not founded on experience of the exaltation of human consciousness, so I do not include it in the realm of scripture.

We are also of the opinion that scriptures are the voice of the sages and seers. Yask has defined the word seer as *ṛṣih darśanāt*[*], which means the seer envisions and experiences the truth. However, not every ascetic is a seer. Only he who can vividly experience the truth by means of his rationally refined knowledge and his piercing wisdom is a seer in the real sense. The Vedas, therefore, depict a seer as a singer of truth. According to the Vedic and the Jain traditions, sagacious speech *(ārṣa vāṇī)* reveals first-hand knowledge which elucidates and

[*] *Nirukta*, 2. 11

establishes the existence of godhead on the basis of an actual experience of the truth. The preacher of true scripture never imparts knowledge borrowed from others. Such knowledge does not encompass the welfare of all. His benevolent teachings spring from the flow of pure knowledge which wells up from within and comes directly from a pure soul. The principle theme of a seer's teachings is to eliminate the impurities of the soul and reveal its light in the form of infinite knowledge and infinite vision.

When that great scriptural expert of the Jain tradition, Acharya Jinabhadra Gani Kshamashraman, was asked what works could be called scriptures, he said, 'That through which knowledge of the real truth is perceived, which disciplines and enlightens the soul, should be called scripture.' [39] The word *shastra* (scripture) in Sanskrit is derived from the root word *shas*, which means to govern, instruct or enlighten. So *shastra* implies an essence of reality that educates, governs and enlightens the soul. This definition is not some kind of imagining on the part of the Acharya - it is firmly based in the Jain *Agamas*. Even the voice of Tirthankar Mahavir comes to us clearly through the *Agamas*: A scripture is that which awakens the soul and leads it to an active involvement in the performance of *tapa*, *kshama*, and *ahimsa*.

The third chapter of the *Uttaradhyayan-Sutra*, which is considered to be the final message from Tirthankar Mahavir, states that there are four things which are most rare and extremely difficult to attain: *māṇusattaṃ suí saddhā sañjamammi ya vīriyaṃ* [40] - 'human birth, truly listening to the scriptures, faith, and a conscious working towards self-control'. Later on in the text, the definition of scripture is given as: *jaṃ sōccā paḍivajjanti tavaṃ khantimahiṃsayaṃ* [41] - 'scripture is that which disciplines the aspirant's mind and awakens in him a feeling for practicing *tapa*'. It results in controlling the impetus of wildly scattered untamed desires. The control of these desires paves the way for abstinence and lends momentum to the journey along the path of forgiveness.

In this context, I would like to add that the word *khanti* - forgiveness - has a broader meaning. Forgiveness is not limited to the quashing of anger alone, but includes the prohibiting and falling away of all passions. Only he who can rid himself of anger, ego, deceit and greed, is truly *kshamavan* - forgiving. Another meaning of the Sanskrit word kshama is 'proficient'. Someone who is capable of overcoming his passions, can conquer evil inclinations like anger and self-importance, and keep his mind ever tranquil, is *kshamavan*.

The Aim of the Scriptures: Welfare for All

Ahimsa, along with the practice of *kshama* (forgiveness) and *tapa* (penance), is one of the factors that is woven into the fabric of all the scriptures, and by this inclusion, the desire for the well-being of all sentient beings is implicit. Tirthankar Mahavir has called ahimsa 'a goddess' *(bhagavati)*. [42] That famous master of scriptural knowledge, Acharya Samantbhadra, has called ahimsa 'the greatest God'[43]. This means ahimsa in its pure form is an all-embracing spiritual concept and is the propitious harbinger of well-being for all. To practice ahimsa is an endeavour to establish welfare for all in the world. Compassion, gentleness, selfless service, co-operation, friendship and fearlessness are all different forms of ahimsa. The scriptures can be defined as containing a philosophy or essence of reality which heals life and cleanses the soul through the practice of *tapa*, *kshama*, and *ahimsa*.

The Purpose of the Scriptures

By understanding the definition of scripture, we understand its purpose. In this context Arya Sudharma Swami, the successor to Tirthankar Mahavir, said, '*savva jaga-jīvarakkhaṇa-dayaṭhṭayāē bhagavayā pāvayaṇaṃ sukahiyaṃ*' [44] – 'The Tirthankars preach sermons for the well-being of the entire world, with the intent of compassion and the security for all creatures at their core' - these are the scriptures.

Sometimes the definition and purpose of something might be one and the same thing, sometimes they may be separate. Here the purpose clearly lies in the definition.

[42] *Prashnavyakaran*, 2/1

[43] *ahimsa bhūtanām jagati viditam brahmam paramam*, Svayambhu-Stotra

[44] *Prashnavyakaran*, 2/1-7

Though the definition itself clarifies the purpose of the scriptures, yet the separate description of the purpose emphasises the fact that the true aim of scripture is to open up the path of universal welfare. This common aim of the scriptures is accepted by Jains, Buddhists and the Vedic religion alike. Even Christians and Mohammedans say that Christ and the prophet Mohammad Saheb brought a message of love and mutual harmony for all. I feel that this singular purpose of the scriptures is so all-pervasive and all-encompassing that it cannot be challenged by any philosopher or any thinker of standing.

When Acharya Haribhadra, the great luminary of the world of the Jain *Agamas*, was confronted with the question about the purpose of scripture, he too repeated, 'Just as water washes all the dirt out of clothing and leaves it shining and clean, so too scripture washes away the filth of all passions like lust, anger, greed and jealousy from the mind and leaves it pure and clean.'[*] Thus, scripture is that essence of reality from which one obtains the knowledge of the self and progresses towards 'pure-being' through practice of self-discipline and ahimsa.

The So-Called Scriptures

The definition of scripture, as described in the paragraphs above, is in itself a science, a truth. Can science ever contradict science? Can truth ever challenge truth? No! No! One truth cannot refute another; if it does, then it is not the truth. So we must recognise that any holy book which can be challenged by human thought or empirical science is not genuine scripture. Be they the Jain *Agamas*, *Shrutis*, *Smritis*, the Buddhist *Tripitakas*, the *Bible* or even the *Koran*, they are compilations fostered in the name of scripture. I do not accept any thought or idea, be it old or new, without question. I cannot tolerate the blind acceptance of any *granth* (book) as the truth, even if it is called a *Shastra*, *Shruti*, or *Smriti*. Neither myself, nor any other independent thinker can stand for this tendency, especially when these so-called scriptures do not successfully pass the universally accepted test of being instrumental in promoting world welfare.

* *malinasya yathātyantam jalam vastrasya śodhanam antaḥkaraṇaratnasya tathā śāstram vidurbudhāḥ.*
Yogabindu Prakaran 2/9

Can those 'holy books' that call for animal slaughter[46] and human sacrifice in the name of religion[47], and raise barriers of hatred and hostility between man and man, ever be the genuine revelations of the sages - the seers of truth? In one so-called scripture, it is said about a *shudra*, who is a member of the human race: 'He is a living crematorium.[48] One should even avoid his shadow.'[49] Does there seem to be any kind of humanity in teachings like this? Woman, who is exclusively granted the great and glorious privilege of motherhood, and who showers the entire human race with love and affection, is referred to in this way: 'There are no greater sinners than women.'[50] Can such statements ever be part of any religion? When these books, sowing the seeds of class conflict, cast-antipathy, and communal hatred - so breaking up human consciousness into many fragments - proclaimed: 'On being touched by any member of a certain sect, one must immediately plunge into water with all one's clothes on'[51], did they show a sign of any self-knowledge?

A sage is a seer and a thinker - one who himself sees the real truth and reflects on it. He experiences with all creatures the 'oneness' of an all-pervading consciousness. Can such a sage or muni, ever utter such malicious or divisive words? Can it be in accordance with the sanctity of scriptures like the *Vedas*, *Agamas*, and *Tripitakas*, that on the one hand, those same sages or munis who preached the scriptures taught amity, and then on the other, they are said to have taught hatred to humankind?

In fact it is inappropriate to consider as scripture any ideas, interpolations, or writings by any scholar from the Middle Ages, be it in Sanskrit, Prakrit, or any other language, and become bogged down in it. I have great regard for the distinctive thought and vision contained in those texts, as I do for their message of universal welfare. I myself read them and preach their ideas. However, I think that it is not right to follow some kind of narrow-minded intellectual tendency to consider these writings to be always true to the letter.

- *yajñartha pasavah srstah svayameva svayambhuva yajnasya bhutya sarvasya tasmadyajne vadho'vadhah* Manusmriti, 5/39
- *Valmiki Ramayan (Sunah sepah)*, Balkand, Sarg 62
- *Vasishth Dharma Sutra*, 4/3
- *yastu chāyam svapakasya brahmano hyadhirohati, tatra snanam prakurvita ghrtam prasya visuddhyati* Atri, 288-289, Yagya 2/30 (quoted from *mitakshara*)
- *na stribhyah kascidanyadvai papiyastaramasti vai* Mahabharat Anu. 38/12

Compilation of the Agamas in the Later Ages

As far as truth is concerned I have never been bound any particular philosophy. I have always supported liberal and independent thinking. So I do not hesitate to comment on the Jain texts from the same critical point of view that I would adopt towards Vedic literature.

Being a student of history, I accept the fact that every religious tradition undergoes changes from time to time, and in the process some false ideas creep in among the true ones. However when the right time comes along, these thoughts are refined as well. At present, I have before me a long list of different opinions regarding the beliefs and structure of the Jain canons. Some of the history is now available for us to look at when, where and how these beliefs were changed, how many of the new ideas were accepted, and how many of the old ones were rejected.

The *Nandi Sutra*, which we include as an *Agama* and hold to be a revelation of the Tirthankar, was in fact compiled a long time after Tirthankar Mahavir's nirvana. It was either written or compiled by Acharya Devavachak. In the lengthy period between the time of Tirthankar Mahavir and that of Acharya Devavachak, there were many major upheavals in the country. There was a saga of famine, political revolution, and rapid change, growth and reaffirmation in all the religious traditions. Yet we accept these sutras, compiled 1,000 years after the nirvana of Mahavir, and all the facts mentioned in them, as the voice of a Tirthankar. Though much of these later *Agamas* touch upon the enhancement of life, I am certain they are not directly connected with the actual revelations of Tirthankar Mahavir. Everyone admits today that much of the original teaching has been lost because of gaps in the system of oral transmission, or the fact that memory is weak. Why then can people not admit that some contemporary beliefs must have been added to the texts at certain points in the compilations.

Today we ought to think about this subject

in an entirely new way. We should assess truth on the basis of reality. As one separates milk from water, we ought to separate the words of Tirthankar Mahavir from those works compiled by scholars in the later ages. We must have courage to do this today, for if we hesitate or shy away, the truth will be concealed from us. Our new age of rationality demands a decisive answer, and this answer will have to be provided by all who are well-versed in the scriptures.

I wonder whether you will ever be able to prevent Mahavir's omniscience from being invalidated, when even today you cling to the illusion that the texts which you recognise as scriptures are literally true in every respect. If we want to safeguard the validity of Mahavir's omniscience, we need to ascertain in a discriminating way which parts of the scriptural works are the words of Mahavir i.e. the real form of the scriptures. If we fail, the generations to come will question Mahavir's omniscience.

Sort out the Scriptures

The question you may ask is who are we to sort through the scriptures and separate from them the voice of Mahavir. What right do we have to decide on the subject matter of the scriptures, or judge what is truly scriptural and what is not?

My reply to this is that we are the heirs of Mahavir: his glory fills our hearts. Under no circumstances can we allow the name of Mahavir to be besmirched. We never did, nor can we ever, believe that Tirthankar Mahavir could preach a falsehood. I would say that whatever has been clearly proved false today or could at some stage be proved false, can never be a statement from a Tirthankar. Applying this same criteria, we can then sort out the Tirthankar's words from the so-called scriptures, then if anyone challenges these teachings, we can counteract their accusations with the truth.

Shatter the Shackles of Inflexible Thought

Spiritual advancement in life does not depend on the number of scriptures or texts traditionally handed down to one's sect. The spiritual state of a person can be highly

developed and elevated despite having only a few scriptures. The thought and vision required for spiritual development are both awakened from within. The more flexible and free one's attitude towards truth is, the more soul-orientated one's thinking, the greater will be one's spiritual development.

I have found that a prejudice for, a sort of lust for scriptures and other holy books, has been formed in our minds. Warning against such bigotry, Acharya Shankar says in the *Vivekchudamani* : 'Lust for the scriptures, like the lust for physical pleasures and the lust for worldly honour will bar one from attaining real knowledge.' Acharya Hemchandra adds: *dṛṣṭirāgastu pāpīyān durucchēdyaḥ satāmapi* –'achieving the truth is almost impossible for anyone whose passions obstruct his perception.'

Every now and then, we talk about *anekant*, (the doctrine of manifold aspects), and *syadvad* (the doctrine of qualified assertion). These should not remain mere slogans like those used by contemporary politicians. They should so become part of our thinking, that our perception of the truth will be unhindered and independent. Until such times as we get rid of our old prejudices and the obstructions to our vision built by blind faith, we will not be able to make the right decisions. Present circumstances demand that we break free of bigotry and begin to think in new ways. In this quest, our own wisdom is the touchstone. Tirthankar Mahavir and Ganadhar Gautam, who themselves were ardent seekers and seers of the truth, have both made it clear that your own wisdom is the only yardstick against which you can measure the real truth, saying : *paṇṇā samikkhaē dhammaṃ*[illegible] – 'religion or the intrinsic truth can be analysed only through wisdom, and truth can be judged only by the means of wisdom.'

Evaluation of the Scriptures

The only method by which the scriptures can be truly examined is through the application of wisdom, and all scriptures should be subjected to its scrutiny. We have many companions who fear that such an examination will reveal that much of our

[illegible] *Uttaradhyayan-Sutra*, 23/25

'gold' is actually brass. I would like to ask them why they are so worried; why they want to slink away from this examination. If something is gold, it will always be gold. If it is brass, how long will its coating of gold last in any case? In separating the gold from the brass, in setting the truth apart from all else, lies the magic of wisdom.

That great commentator on the Jain *Agamas*, Acharya Abhaydev, in his commentary on the *Bhagavati-Sutra*, has laid down an important principle that could serve as a test for finding the true voice of Mahavir. He asks the following questions: Who could be called a Realised Soul or a Venerated One? What could be called the revelation of a Tirthankar ? What is divine preaching? In reply, he says that Tirthankars preach only that truth which is an aspect of liberation, and a means to it. They do not preach anything that has no immediate bearing on the liberation of the soul. Had they done so, their own omniscience could not have been called so.[30]

This is a true touchstone for judging the genuineness of the scriptures that Acharya Abhaydev has presented to us. Before him the great logician of the fifth century, Acharya Siddhasen, who established Jain ontology on a par with other schools of philosophy, also propounded a decisive means of examining scriptures. He said, 'That is true scripture which contains knowledge experienced and examined by the Realised Ones, that cannot be displaced by the words of others, that establishes a principle which cannot be invalidated by argument or other evidence, that is beneficial as an instrument for the universal welfare of all creatures, and that resists ideologies opposing spiritual aspirations.'[31]

This method of examining scripture given to us by the Acharya is still valid today. When Kapil, the great philosopher of the Vedic tradition, and the great dialectician Gautam, included *shabda* – the Sanskrit for 'word'– as part of the authoritative testimony for judging a truth, they were asked which words would be acceptable as this authoritative testimony. To this they replied, 'The word of the Realised Ones is

[30] *nahi aptah sākṣād pāramparyēṇa vā yanna mōkṣāngam tad pratipadayitumutsahate anāptatvaprasangat*, Acharya Abhaydev, *Bhagavati-Vritti* 1/1

[31] *aptōpajnamanullanghyamadṛṣṭeṣṭavirodhakam, tattvōpadeśakṛtsarvam śastram kāpathaghaṭṭanam*, Nyayavatar, 9

valid testimony.' The next question was, 'Who is an *Apta* (Realised One)?' They answered, 'An *Apta* is one who preaches the truth. He whose word is free of all contradiction, irrelevance, or irrationality is a Realised or Venerable One. Words that can neither counter, nor be invalidated by other testimonies, are revelations.'[*] The statement from the Acharya, quoted above, proves beyond doubt which words and whose words can be accepted as testimony to the truth. No matter how large or a reputable the book, do not ever accept as revelations of a Tirthankar, words in it that are not truthful, or that fail to stand the test of the truth. By so doing you prove your own genuineness, and the authenticity of the revelation.

We should make the Decisions

I have discussed these finer points of logic so that we can awaken our intellect and decide for ourselves what scripture truly is, and what its purpose. Let us also conclude that those works, which are not in keeping with the definition and purpose we have just discussed, are not scriptures at all. They can be anything else - a compilation, a creative work, a treatise, or a book - but they cannot be called the revelation of a Tirthankar, nor can they be called scripture.

According to the *Uttaradhyayan-Sutra*, only that literary work which inspires one towards the practice of *kshama*, *tapa*, and *ahimsa*, and thus awakens the soul, can be called scripture. This is such a sound and excellent method of testing what the scriptures are that, if we use it as a yardstick to sort them out, we are bound to progress in the right direction.

Whenever I have presented these views to fellow *munis* and other spiritual seekers, they have said, " What you say is true, but how can we say that we do not accept a particular *Agama* as scripture? If we did so, it would create havoc. *Shravaks* would lose their faith and our religion would suffer a setback". I am astonished at the cowardice of this timid and reactionary response. What sort of mentality do we have? We understand that something is true, but we cannot say so, for fear of what people might

[*] *aptopadeshah shabdah*, Sankhyadarshan, 1/101 Nyayadarshan 1/1/

say! This slavish way of thinking, I believe, has toppled our ideals and destroyed our culture. This type of mindset has been responsible for the rise of scepticism and a resultant antipathy towards religion in our time.

Devotion to Omniscience or Attachment to the Scriptures

It is from scriptures that we gain knowledge of the supreme state of the soul. We are souls and a Tirthankar is a supreme and purified soul. The difference between a worldly soul and a supreme soul is only one of a degree of purity. Soul in its purest state is God. The essential nature of the supreme soul is not different from that of our own soul. Only those scriptures which enlighten us about our soul, show us the way to becoming a supreme soul, pave the way for purification and the perfection of our lives are true scriptures. These are the only ones we need. It is harmful to count those texts as scriptures that lead us to self-delusion and make us 'world-orientated' instead of 'soul-orientated'. Such pseudo-scriptures distance us from true faith, make our minds restless with doubts, and provide others with an opportunity to mock our Tirthankars and our scriptures.

If you look at things in an unbiased and objective manner, you may begin to wonder whether scriptures containing elaborate geographical and astronomical data, descriptions of the moon and the sun, of planets and constellations, or mountains and oceans can provide us with any inspiration for freeing ourselves from bondage. How do they show us the way to self-belief? What lessons of *kshama*, *tapa*, and *ahimsa* do we learn from them? Why should we consider those books, which have no relevance for our self-seeking consciousness and nothing to do with our aspirations towards purification, as our scriptures? On what basis should we accept them as the words, or even the teachings of the All-Knowing Ones?

Many of the sacred books of the Jains, the Buddhists and the Hindus were compiled and revised during a period which stretched from a few centuries BC to 4th and 5th century AD. Whatever books were written

in Sanskrit or Prakrit during that period were all included in the list of scriptures. The result was man's power to independently reason atrophied as he devoutly accepted every book as part of the scriptures, and everything written in them as a revelation of the Realised Ones. None of the Indian religious traditions has escaped this intellectual impairment. In the beginning this erroneous attitude may have gone unnoticed as they were blinkered by their devotion, but today its devastating effects are evident. The devotees of Indian religious traditions have become so entangled in these so-called scriptures that they are neither able to achieve anything with them, nor be wholly rid of them.

My writing this is not intended as a repudiation of, or an insult to, the scriptures. We should understand and accept that scriptures differ from books, and having done so, break free from this unquestioning faith in these so-called scriptures. Scripture is not a compilation of a false belief, it is a manifestation of the truth. I regard the sayings of the sages, the seers of truth, as sacred. I deeply revere the voice of Mahavir since it touches the soul and is the ultimate and unchanging truth. However, I do not hold as scripture the books written in the name of the Realised Ones, as they are bereft of any speck of spiritual awareness, and are devoid of the actual experience of the beautiful, the true and the good.

I have an unshakeable faith in Mahavir, and my heart is filled with reverence for the truth-seeing sages. This faith, this veneration becomes more powerful and more intense the more it reaches the depths of reflection. Even today, I see that supreme light within me and once again I dedicate my heart completely to it. Mahavir is a pillar of light to me, and the brilliance of his words penetrates and illumines every aspect of my being. In the light of my own reasoning I can clearly see in the scriptures that which is, and that which is not, the voice of a Tirthankar. Words which kindle in our hearts the flame of truth, awaken our slumbering godhead, and expand our inner consciousness to an all-permeating and all-powerful form, can only be the words of the Realised Ones.

The vibrancy of the Tirthanakar's voice is attuned to the pace of the soul's progress; it has nothing to do with the course of the stars and the satellites, the depths of rivers and streams, or the greater or lesser heights of mountains of gold and silver. The voice of the seers represents an all-encompassing friendship and a universal consciousness. There are no notes in it of class conflict, cast antipathy, or false fantasies. Neither science, nor experiment can ever challenge the eternal truth that echoes in the voice of the Realised Ones. No genuine seeker after the truth can ever negate the teachings of the Venerated Ones. However, we should not remain so entrenched in our ignorance; we should not believe that everything which passes in the name of scripture, is indeed the indubitable voice of the Supreme Ones, and that every word written in these texts is the gospel truth. To stamp every compilation written in Prakrit, or Ardha-Magadhi with the seal of Mahavir, is not a reflection of true devotion. If we are true devotees, true believers, we need to free ourselves from this tendency; we must understand that any thought, factual information or expression that pertains to research and the analysis of the material world, and can also be disproved by empirical evidence, is not a divine revelation, and we cannot recognise it as a scripture either. It may be a collection, a composition, or literature created or compiled by Acharyas, but it cannot be scripture.

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There is a limit to seeing. Even from a short distance it is constrained. In order to see further, one must reach the edge of that which has already been seen. A traveller walks along the road. His goal is to go 10, 20 or 30 miles further. It is impossible to see his final destination from the place where he is standing. He is only able to see that measure of the path that is directly in front of him. The rest remains invisible. But as the traveller goes forward and finds his way, the path before him becomes more and more visible. With each step he takes, the length of his journey decreases. And without doubt he will reach his goal. Therefore, walk with a firm tread and great determination and the splendour of success will automatically come to you; the path will become clearer and your destination will be in sight.

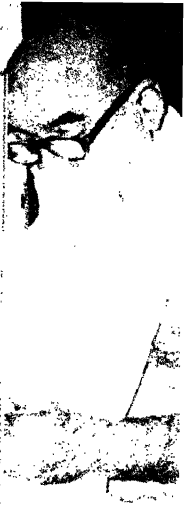
Pearls of Wisdom

Often in moments of divine revelation, quite spontaneously and without effort, words are uttered by the Realised Ones that become precious gems in the treasure-trove of spiritual life. These axioms are brilliant stars in the firmament of wisdom; they are like pillars of radiance awakening others to the inner life. A few of them are presented in the following pages :-



People often ask me, "Sir, how does one envisage God? How can one gain an audience with him?" Scholars and Pundits pose the same questions. In cases like this I would say, "Why don't you have the same strong urge to know yourself as you do to see God?" You have a desire to envisage God, but before that you must learn how to see yourself. Get to know your elders, your mother, father, brother and sister. Get to know your neighbour who is grieving. Get to know the man who is groaning with pain or distressed because he is hungry. When you start doing this, the vision of God will come of its own accord.

• Family problems are a big issue in society today. They are like a poison destroying all the joys in life. I was talking to the head of a large, prosperous family. All his complaints were about friction between, and discontent amongst, family members. Lack of tolerance and patience is the cause of the destruction of family unity and the root of family misery. I told him a story from seventeenth century Japan about an old Minister called O-Cho-San. It was said that there were over a thousand people in his family. They were famous throughout Japan for their benevolence and mutual harmony. It was said that even the dog from O-Cho-San's house would not steal a bone from another dog. One day the Emperor went to the home of his former Minister



to find out the secret of his family's harmony and benevolence. After exchanging greetings, the Emperor asked the old man, "What is the great spell by which you bind your enormous family together with such unbreakable ties of mutual tenderness and affection?" The old Minister took up parchment and ink and wrote down a hundred words with trembling brush strokes, and then placed it before the Emperor. When the Emperor read it, he found it consisted of the same word written out a hundred times: "Tolerance, tolerance, tolerance......." The Emperor was dumbstruck. The old man said, "Your Majesty, this is the spell that binds my family together with hoops of steel." If in today's society fathers and sons, daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, wives and husbands learnt the magic of tolerance and forbearance, then countless social problems would be easily resolved.

• A gentleman who, though very spiritually minded, is rather dry and doctrinaire, sometimes comes to visit me. One day in the course of our conversation, he suddenly said, "In life both evil and good deeds create bondage. Surely, both should be avoided!" I replied, "Good deeds do certainly carry karmic consequences and can be considered as binding to the soul; however, until one has been purged of all karmic particles and reached the fourteenth *gunasthanak* - the stage of purity, the bondage of good deeds will continue. There is no need to follow any other independent method to rid yourself of it." He replied, "Yet it is a sort of bondage, and one should strive to free the soul from all types of bondage. That is why to do too much good is undesirable. It too makes the soul heavy and binds it to the wheel of re-birth." I said, 'There was once a prosperous merchant who sent his servant to the post office with an urgent letter. He said to the man, " I am afraid that the letter might be too heavy and may require more stamps. Check at the post office counter and put on as many extra stamps as are needed." The servant heard him out in silence, but secretly he thought to himself, "Surely my master is getting senile! If I put on more stamps the letter will only weigh more! Since my master is worried about the

envelope being too heavy, let me remove the stamps that have already been affixed, for then the letter is bound to become light enough to be delivered quickly!" From his point of view the servant was being conscientious and helpful. It is true that good deeds create bondage, but they are like the stamps on the envelope – without them, life is meaningless and futile because it cannot reach its destination.'

• Sometimes I wonder whether true socialism can ever be brought into a country by its constitution. Can the needle and thread of politics really be used to 'stitch' men's hearts together? Can power and authority actually create empathy and fellow-feeling amongst the people? Even after much deliberation on this point, the answer is always the same. Never! Never! Social betterment, mutual tolerance, co-operation, fellow-feeling and empathy, all these can never be imposed on the people from above. Rather they should come from within and flow out into the world. Social well-being requires co-operation, and co-operation requires empathy and fellow-feeling.

• There is a difference between reform or repair and root and branch change, just as there is a difference between revolution and evolution, or improvement and the creation of something new. Some desire reform and others want root and branch change, some want improvements and others to create anew, some want evolution, others revolution. All these things are necessary in life but all have their limitations.

If a piece of cloth gets torn it can be sewn up; if it gets dirty, it can be washed. In this way, it can still be used. It has been repaired. However, when it gets so threadbare and torn that it ceases to be a piece of cloth and becomes a rag, then we should throw it away. Continue to wear it and the world will conclude that you are either a fool or a pauper. Here is an old house. When cracks appear they are repaired with cement, when tiles fall off, they are replaced. However, a day will finally come when the foundations are so eroded, the walls so weak that far from being a sturdy building the house stands in imminent danger of becoming a ruin, with the caving-in of the roof likely to

cost ten or fifteen lives. Once this stage is reached, the sensible course is to have the building demolished and a new house built on the site. When we buy a new cloth, or put up a new building, then we face a new atmosphere, a new appearance and new circumstances. This is what we call a root & branch change.

The same arguments apply to issues regarding family, society, nation and religion. So long as reform or repair is possible, let it continue; but when things come to such a pass that institutions and traditions are mere ruins of their former selves, then it is better to demolish them and build new ones. This we call a revolution, a new creation, or a root and branch change. If we don't learn to discriminate between the limits of both reform and revolution then it is possible we will be in conflict with the coming age.

• When I see the throng of devotees in temples and places of pilgrimage, all oblivious to the climate or the jostling of the crowd, immersed in the intensity of their prayer or their chanting, I am led to believe these people must be the great heroes of our religion. However, when I see these same people being deceitful and cruel at home and in the workplace, then I just shudder. I believe that these are the people who have brought about the world's apathy towards religion and spread hatred and contempt for it throughout society. It is as clear as daylight that as long as religion is not practised as part of everyday life, then all this worship in temples and mosques and pilgrimage sites will remain an empty ritual. Only when religion is established as an active force in daily life is God truly worshipped.

• Life's development is in ebb and flow. You may have seen how a village pond collects waters from here and there and then remains stagnant. There is no movement and no flow. What is the future of a pond like this? To be fouled up, stagnant, breed countless flies, become the home for all sorts of filth, spread diseases and, ultimately, to be depleted of everything and eventually vanish - such is its destiny. The same applies

to life. Our life should be like a swift-flowing stream. Stand on the banks of any such stream and the purity and brilliance of its waters will impress you. Because it flows swiftly, it is constantly changing and taking on new forms. Movement is life and life is movement. It is not like an inert substance that will stand in one place without moving. That which stops developing stops existing, whether it be an individual or a whole society. Each day brings renewed life to those who get things moving. We must move forward in every moment of our lives.

• It is true that as an individual you are a single and separate entity but as part of a family, a society, a nation or the world, your existence is vast and imposing. Your thoughts and feelings, deeds and reflections are without limits. The ideals of Tirthankar Mahavir, as well as those of Indian culture in general, are that we should not restrict ourselves to our own interests; we should think of the welfare of all. To help each other is life's purpose. Religion teaches us that all life is one. Religion lies in reuniting scattered humanity, awakening the inner selves of those around you and living with all on a basis of friendship and brotherhood.

• To realise the ultimate truth, you have to have a thirst for it. Truth cannot be found until this thirst is awakened in you. After having knocked on the doors of many gurus, a wandering aspirant found that not one of them was yet past thinking in terms of heaven and hell, or of attaining an exalted position in the 'next-world'. Finally he knocked on the door of a guru who had come to the realisation of the truth. From inside the house he heard the question, "Who are you?" The searcher replied, "It is to find the answer to that question that I have worn out my shoes visiting countless gurus till finally I have come to you!" On noting the man's real thirst for the truth, the guru showed him the path of true knowledge. Without the key of the thirst for knowledge, the padlock of ignorance remains locked, and no ray of light can penetrate the gloom surrounding the soul. Thirst for knowledge is a prerequisite for gaining the truth.

• Ahimsa in *vritti* means the uninterrupted flow of ahimsa from the depths of one's inner being. One who has an attitude of ahimsa from within can never hurt, distress or kill anyone or anything. This means that when our inner-being is suffused with ahimsa the espousal of himsa ceases to exist. This assimilation of ahimsa is not for the sake of gaining heaven, securing prestige and comfort in society or for the family. One whose consciousness is imbued with ahimsa simply cannot commit a violent or harmful act, even if he forfeits his life in the process. For him ahimsa has become part of his nature. 'I should love my enemies,' no longer needs to remain a principle for him; it has actually been realised as he has no enemies left. He does not need to say that we should all love one another because he has nothing but love for others within him. This is ahimsa in *vritti* in its all-pervading and eternal form.

• You say, "How long should we continue doing good for others? Kindness too has its limits. For our part we go on helping people, but they keep on returning evil for good. Therefore we too have given up doing good." Then I say, "As the others have not yet put a limit on their doing evil, why do you put a limit on your doing good? If evil can be without limits, the same must hold true for good." In actual fact evil does have limits but goodness knows no bounds!

• Time is eternally fresh because it moves forward every moment; every instant something new appears. Man, however, stays as he is; he seems reluctant to move forward. This is what is called going towards death. On the contrary, life means going onwards together with Time. There should not be the slightest gap between life and Time. This involves being able to catch the fleeting moment, an ability given only to a few enlightened individuals. One who lets Time slip by, allows death to take over. Only when the individual keeps pace with Time does he realise what life is.

• From time to time situations arise in life that appear small and insignificant, but in reality they are very important. People should be careful to examine events

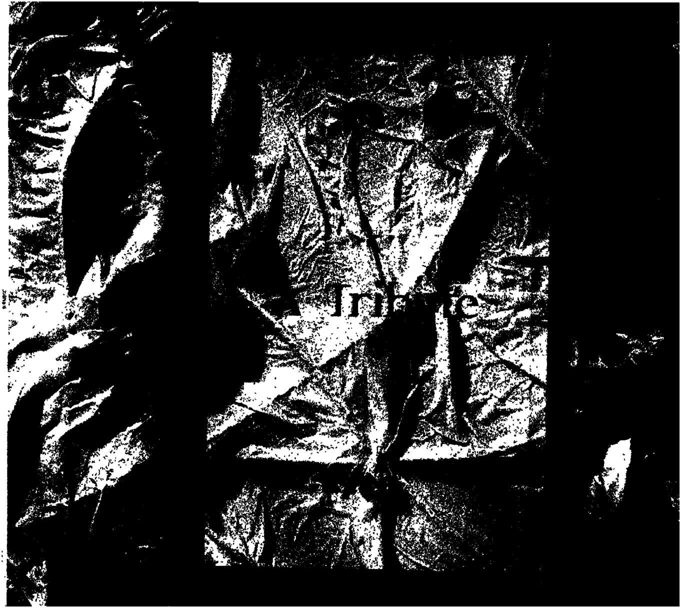
properly. There is no individual who is worthless or insignificant in the entire universe. Things may seem petty but pettiness is only perceived, not real. The person who appears ordinary and less effective in doing things today, may turn out to be of use to others and even extraordinary tomorrow. Don't neglect anyone or treat them with contempt. Be affectionate and helpful to as many people as you can. It is possible that a small service performed by you today might be a big help to others and what is more, it might turn out to be an important event in years to come.

A student of geography once said to me that the ocean had needlessly occupied many of the spaces of the earth. 'The ocean's water is salty,' he said, 'not useful for drinking, nor for irrigation; the ocean is nothing more than a source of salt.'

I said to him, 'Yes, it may be a source of salt, but it is also a source of precious jewels. If a man works conscientiously with a proper awareness in all his actions, he will surely gain from it. Where does one find such a cache of pearls? Where is the source of such unique jewels hidden?' It is true that for the common people, the ocean is only a source of salt, but for those who are industrious and do their work with discrimination and courage, the ocean is a source of jewels without peer. This life is like an ocean, which, with laziness and foolishness will simply become as worthless as a sea comprised only of salt. But when vigour and conscientiousness are applied, this very ocean becomes a source of gems, a treasure trove of incomparable jewels.

Sometimes thoughtful and intelligent people pose the question: What is religion? Is it an organisation or a spiritual quest? I would say that once religion begins to organise, it starts taking on the form of different sects. These can no doubt help us a little in everyday life; they are, however, of no use to us for our inner development. Religion is the awakening of the soul; it fills life with light. It is not possible to get lost when following the path of true religion. Sectarianism is the opiate of the masses and the exploiter of crowds. To follow religion truly, it is necessary to have a clear conscience and keep your own counsel.

In life we always need some means of discriminating between good and bad in what we do and what we plan to do. Some say a particular action is good, while others call it bad. What measures can we take to decide between good and evil? There are as many opinions about this, as there are mouths to voice them. Ultimately everyone will have to agree on a common yardstick - the action that helps in elevating life to some higher purpose is good, and that which makes it mean and base is bad.



Twenty-five years have passed since the foundations of Veerayatan were first laid in the holy land of Rajgir so sacred to the Tirthankars. The story of its development is one of courage, endurance and unrelenting effort that cannot be expressed in words alone. It is impossible to do justice to, or even properly thank, all the enthusiastic volunteers involved in the endeavour. A modest attempt, however, has been made in the following pages to highlight how such a grand project, one that will endure through the ages, was brought into being in present-day Bihar.



Our story begins on *Sharad Purnima* night in 1962. Rajgir and its surroundings were enveloped in the dazzling light of the moon. Visible on the summit of the Vaibhargiri Hills, and magnificent as the Himalayas, sat the motionless figure of a sage deep in meditation. Nothing disturbed him – dust storms or cloudbursts, heat or cold. At one with the birds and beasts of the forests, his gaze remained fixed upon the piece of land that once had seen Tirthankar Mahavir's *samavasarana*. Images from the past unfolded on his inner eye and waves of joy engulfed him as he was taken back in time to the glories of Magadh. Then the present intruded, and as Bihar's troubled horizons came back into focus, the mighty sage bowed his head in shame.

The conflict between the past and the present caused the great sage unbearable pain. One question haunted him: Who was responsible for the failure to observe Tirthankar Mahavir's teachings in this the land of his origin? He pondered the question over and over again, and then like spring water bursting forth in a clear stream, the answer came to him. He had a vision of seeing the miracle of Mahavir's compassion reawakened in the hearts of mankind. He was convinced that if we were his successors, the work of spreading Tirthankar Mahavir's teachings was the responsibility of us all. It was up to us to take his message of love, compassion, and non-violence to the four corners of the universe.



The great sage who had seen this divine vision was Pujya Gurudev Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj, under whose guiding light the mammoth task of incorporating traditional truths and values with the needs of a fast-changing society began. It was his revolutionary insight and understanding of the implications of this vision that finally brought about its realisation.

At the same time another great soul was experiencing the need to revitalise religious values in accordance with a rapidly modernising society. She was not only a fount of knowledge, but also a person of great holiness. Truly enlightened, this awakened soul - the embodiment of foresight, intelligence, divine radiance and other uncommon talents - saw in the depths of the infinite ocean a vision similar to that of the sage on the mountain. After she had studied the original thoughts of the great Tirthankars, she realised that certain traditions had lost their spirituality. She had the courage to set aside the shackles of hidebound tradition. Her dream was to propagate Tirthankar Mahavir's philosophy of non-violence in a positive way.

Three decades ago it was considered a crime to break with tradition or dream about the sort of change envisaged by Sadhvi Shri Chandana Shriji (consecrated as Acharya Shri Chandana Shriji in 1987). But she challenged the traditionalists and awakened them to the needs of the times. Her endless questions left them hopelessly confused. She would ask:

- Should the city-dwelling sadhu of today follow the rules laid down by the forest-dwelling ascetics of ancient times?
- Why are the numbers of Jains decreasing instead of increasing?
- Which is more important, following tradition or following Mahavir?

These pointed questions dismayed the traditionalists who, unable to answer them, resorted to criticism in retaliation. They maintained that they could not deviate from the traditions laid down by their ancestors. "Tradition alone is our religion; in tradition rests our honour, our welfare and our security," they said.

Sadhvishri spoke out against such narrow perceptions. "I do not want praise or adulation for myself. I only want to serve Mahavir and follow his doctrine of non-violence," she said. In the face of her skilful arguments, senseless rituals lost their lustre. It was this radiance of the soul, called '*teja*' in Sanskrit, that led her to Pujya Gurudev Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj, who recognised in her a kindred spirit. He was like a sculptor who could imbue stone with life. The childlike simplicity of his face reflected the conquest of all passions. His limitless compassion for all living beings naturally attracted everyone to him and they were struck by the purity of his consciousness. His deep and sonorous voice touched the hearts of his listeners, and his serene and authoritative presence filled his disciples with tremendous energy. His dazzling intellect, positive outlook and spiritual power introduced a fresh way of looking at religion and took Jainism to new heights.

Both these great visionaries, Maharshi Amar Muniji Maharaj and Sadhvi Shri Chandana Shriji, were determined each in their own way to realise a dream. The common theme of their vision was to bring about the relevant changes in society, and the meeting of this extraordinary guru with his astonishing disciple meant that two dreams became one reality.

Nandadeep: The Lamp of Bliss

In 1970 an assembly was organised in Agra, city of the Taj Mahal, to mark the anniversary of Tirthankar Parshvanath's birth. At this assembly, graced by Jain Acharya Shri Prithvi Chandraji Maharaj, Pujya Gurudev Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj proclaimed: "The 25th centenary of Tirthankar Mahavir's attainment of nirvana is indeed an auspicious occasion. To commemorate this great event a *Nandadeep* (lamp of bliss) should be lit in the holy land of Rajgir, where Tirthankar Mahavir spent fourteen of his *chaturmas*. The light of this lamp will shine through the ages and spread the message of compassion to everyone."

As Amar Muniji's voice reverberated through the assembly hall, it awoke

answering echoes in the minds of his devout listeners. As the audience sat spellbound, Sadhvishri was inspired. She stood up full of courage and enthusiasm and in a soft voice steely with resolve, addressed her guru : "Pujya Gurudev, I present myself to you! Give me your blessing so that I may undertake this great task and accomplish it successfully".

The entire assemblage craned their necks to look at her. Everyone present was as immobile as a figure in a painting. They were incapable of speech, and gaping with amazement, they stared at her as if she were a goddess. They began to ask themselves whether a sadhvi should really brave the wild jungle on her own. Was it proper for a Jain sadhvi to venture among rebellious tribes in an area which was not even inhabited by anyone from the Jain community? Who would be interested in religious sermons in an area where people did not have a crumb to eat, or enough clothing to wear or a roof to shelter under? After all, however holy a soul might be, the body needs sustenance.

Some people present scoffed at Sadhvishri, claiming that promises were easier made than kept. Anyone can talk, they said, but few have the courage and resolution to carry out such a visionary scheme.

In the midst of all this scepticism Sadhvishri remained undaunted, and Gurudev watched her resolve with delight and approval. In the age-old gesture of the sages, Gurudev, seated majestically on his simple wooden ceremonial seat, raised his hand and joyfully bestowed his blessing. Pujya Shri Prithvi Chandraji Maharaj, Shri Akhilesh Muniji Maharaj,





Shri Rambha Kunwarji Maharaj and Gurumata Shri Sumati Kunwarji Maharaj immediately then showered Sadhvishri with their blessings, marking the beginning of a great project.





Naming the Nandadeep

In 1971, during the auspicious celebrations for the birthday of Tirthankar Mahavir, the highly symbolic name of 'Veerayatan' was given to the project for the setting up of the said *Nandadeep* in the holy land of Rajgir. The name combines the epithet *Veer* (hero) from Mahavir's name, with the Sanskrit word *Ayatan* which signifies *samavasarana* (where all beings are afforded equal protection). The name 'Veerayatan' therefore, literally means 'the land of Tirthankar Mahavir', but the wider implications of the word make it 'the land where truth and non-violence prevail'.

It was at this historic spot Rajgir that Tirthankar Muni Suvrat Swami's four *kalyanaks* (auspicious moments) took place. This is the holy place where, casting aside their great wealth – the extent of which had astonished even King Shrenik – Dhanna and Shalibhadra dedicated themselves to Tirthankar Mahavir. It is said that they crossed 'over the ocean of life and death' in the ship of the Jain religion with Tirthankar Mahavir at the helm. This holy land is also witness to the dreams and fantasies of little Atimukta who, by sailing a paper boat on the water, sailed his own voyage of life and death and liberated himself. Here every

stone tells the story of some great sage whose very presence made it a sacred spot. Every speck of dust here has been purified by the touch of the Tirthankars' holy feet and this hallowed ground has also had the honour of hosting Tirthankar Mahavir's fourteen *chaturmas*.

Soon after the name Veerayatan had been announced, a proposed outline for the implementation of this adventurous project was also unveiled. Discussions took place every day amongst those who sat at the feet of Pujya Gurudev. Plans were soon committed to paper. At the naming ceremony, Shri Khelshankarbhai Durlabhji of Jaipur came to see Gurudev. Inspired by the celebrations about to be held for the twenty fifth centenary of Tirthankar Mahavir's nirvana, and motivated by Sadhvishri's piety and dedication, he paid homage to Gurudev by giving a donation for the new project with such enthusiasm that waves of admiration ran through the entire community. Other devotees of Gurudev - Sushravak Seth Achal Singhji of Agra, Mayor Shri Kalyandasji, and Shri Padma Chandji - also pledged their support. As soon as plans for Veerayatan were made public, Gurudev was inundated with many petitions from numerous towns and cities. Some requests were related to the implementation of their own plans for celebrating the centenary, while others entertained the hope that Veerayatan would be built in their town or city.

The seeds of the Veerayatan project, which had been planted in Gurudev's mind in 1962, finally sprouted in 1970. On the occasion of the twenty fifth centenary of Tirthankar Mahavir's nirvana in 1973, Sadhvishri gave the final touches to the project and began preparations to bring it to full flower.

Sadhvishri Chandana Shriji's assault upon centuries of hidebound tradition was not viewed with approval by the community and adverse reactions might have resulted had not her scholarship and superior knowledge struck people with awe. Due to her charismatic personality, invitations for her to spend *chaturmas* began to arrive from



many parts of the country. At that time Pujya Gurudev was immersed in the bliss of service to Dadaguru Shri Prithvi Chandraji Maharaj. His *chaturmas* for 1971 and 1972 were scheduled to be in Agra. As it was closer to Bihar and more favourable for putting in motion the plans of Veerayatan, Pujya Gurudev selected Calcutta as the place for Sadhvishri's *chaturmas*. Rajgir had by now been confirmed as the site for Veerayatan. Gurudev said, his voice resonant with conviction, "Mahavir will be commemorated in the place he himself has hallowed, the spot sanctified by his birth and nirvana."

The Indian Government fixed the duration of the centenary year of Mahavir's nirvana from 13th November 1973 - the festival of Diwali - to the Diwali of the following year. There were just two years left to implement the Veerayatan project. The great honour of hosting Sadhvishri's *chaturmas* for both these years fell to the city of Calcutta. In 1971 at the courteous invitation of all the members of the Calcutta Association - Shri Keshubhai Khanderiya (Veerayatan's first chairman), Shri Naginbhai Shah, Shri Rasikbhai Shah, Shri Chotelal Gandhi and Shri Durlabhji Khara - Sadhvishri, accompanied by other sadhvijis, left Agra for Calcutta with Veerayatan's mission firmly in her sights.

She was fortunate to have with her in this group, her gurus Shri Sumati Kunwarji Maharaj and Taponurti Pujya Shri Rambha Kunwarji Maharaj, who had always regarded Sadhvishri Chandanaji as their spiritual daughter. They spent the journey bestowing upon their disciple the power to successfully carry out her mission. They also offered prayers to ward off any danger or stumbling blocks on the way to Bihar. These two saintly beings and the other sadhvijis gave up all their comforts and walked 20 miles a day with Sadhvishri Chandana Shriji.

First Entry into Bihar

This was Sadhvishri's first entrance into the state of Bihar. Taking to heart the words of Gurudev, she proceeded first to Rajgir. In the course of her journey she climbed to the summit of Vaibhargiri and was

immediately gripped by a sensation of wonder, as if every atom of her body had become fully alive for the first time. Every fibre of her being seemed to be saying something; seemed to be trying to indicate something to her, inviting her to do something. That magical moment made an indelible impression on her mind, and sealed within her being a spectrum of indescribable experiences.

On her return, however, an incident occurred which, though small, had a dramatic influence on Sadhvishri, and only served to strengthen her resolve. As she was coming down from the mountain, her thoughts still crossing the high peaks, she saw a group of tribal woodcutters going up in the opposite direction, collecting dry sticks and leaves in their baskets. When they caught sight of her strange attire, they were startled and stood to one side. As Sadhvishri drew nearer, on her progress down the mountain, one of them blurted out, "Who are you people?"

It was an ordinary question but it hurt her deeply. She felt like a daughter who had returned to her father's house only to find that everyone had forgotten who she was. Sadhvishri went quiet and tried to fathom the depth of the question. As she went deeper and deeper into it, she realised that these people had completely forgotten about their past. Still in a state of introspection, she pictured the ancestors of this tribe sitting calmly, meditatively, in a serene posture, listening to the preaching of a Tirthankar in a *samavasarana*. As Sadhvishri continued her descent, she determined to bring back their forgotten memories and restore this precious vision once again to them.

From Bihar to Calcutta

Deeply moved by her experiences in Rajgir, Sadhvishri's desire to build Veerayatan was strengthened, and she set off for Calcutta with renewed vigour. She was welcomed there by the former Chief Minister of Bengal, Shri Vijay Singhji Nahar, who was greatly impressed by her warm personality. She completed her *chaturmas* at Badabazar in Howrah, where,

despite her revolutionary ideas, even the traditionally conservative Jain community was touched by her purity, gentle disposition, and profound knowledge.

Though Sadhvishri was in Calcutta with her disciples, her heart was in Rajgir. Day and night she thought about Veerayatan. Whenever the occasion presented itself, she would eloquently express in her talks the plans for it. In Agra meanwhile, Pujya Gurudev and his disciples were also engrossed in propagating ideas for Veerayatan. He spoke and wrote inspirationally about this great event. Every issue of the *Shri Amar Bharati Patrika* carried updates on the project. One of his disciples, Pujya Samadarshiji Maharaj, kept collecting material and writing articles about Veerayatan.

The Initial Stages of Veerayatan

Sadhvishri felt that people were not able to understand the vision behind Veerayatan. Even if some of them did, it was only to raise doubts about the feasibility or advisability of setting up such an important institution in such a remote and backward area. Some people even dismissed the whole project as a mere flight of fancy, unworthy of serious consideration. Critics notwithstanding, Sadhvishri's qualities of grit, patience and commitment, together with the strength drawn from the purity of her inspiration, kept her on course. She was a constant source of energy and enthusiasm. She never despaired and never let anyone else get downhearted.

Sadhvishri now made simple three-dimensional models representing the story ofTirthankar Mahavir's life. In the same way that a mother might use the reflection of the moon in a jar of water to explain the real moon to an innocent child, even so Sadhvishri, by presenting models of the future shape ofVeerayatan, began to educate people in this regard.

While she was in Calcutta, she laid the foundations for a more stimulating and interactive format of religious education for young people by organising quizzes, elocution classes, debates and a variety of

other absorbing and inspiring activities. She introduced them to a greater spiritual awareness whilst helping to raise their self confidence. She organised a Veerayatan Children's Committee – *Veerayatan Bal Parishad*, and a group of girls called



Veerayatan Balika Parishad, and entrusted them with the solemn task of raising awareness on issues concerning Veerayatan. She sent taskforces to different provinces to spread the word.

In 1972 she completed her *chaturmas* in the suburb of Bhavanipur in Calcutta. Whilst she was there, it took her only thirty-five days to complete a remarkable translation,



from Prakrit into Hindi, of the *Uttaradhyayan-Sutra*, one of the most important Jain scriptures – a translation still read and respected by scholars today. This was proof positive of her extraordinary tenacity - work like this could only be accomplished by a spiritually enlightened person.

Acquisition of Land

Sadhvishri always completes any task she sets out to do. Sometimes her perseverance is mistaken for stubbornness. Plans for Veerayatan, that had begun as a tiny seed planted in her mind, were now growing,

blossoming and coming to fruition. She set about mobilising the Jain community in Calcutta to acquire land in Rajgir. When the Veerayatan project was first mooted, governments, corporate foundations and community organisations of various states had lobbied energetically to have it located in their own region. Shri Kedar Pandey, former Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Bhishma Narayan Singh, Shri Bindeshwari Dubey and Shri Surendra Prasad 'Tarun' approached Gurudev and made an offer of 30 acres of land in the neighbourhood of



Rajgir's Panditpur village. The land in question had access to roads, water, and security forces. Sadhvishri's heart, however, was set on a spot more intimately connected with Tirthankar Mahavir's presence. It was also the spot that Pujya Gurudev had seen in his vision on Vaibhargiri. Sadhvishri, therefore, emphasised the need to acquire land in the northern foothills of the Vaibhargiri range. She was also drawn to the area because of the experience she had had there.

On the instructions of Sadhvishri, the honourable members of the Calcutta community, Shri Naginbhai Shah, Chotubhai Gandhi, Keshubhai Khanderia, Rasikbhai Shah and Durlabhjibhai Khara went to Rajgir. Discussions were held with local residents regarding the acquisition of



land. Land was both cheap and easy to obtain at the time. However, the owner of the plot that Sadhvishri was keen on acquiring could not be traced. The local community did not think the area fit to be occupied by decent people and well-wishers advised against its acquisition. Frustrated and confused, the members of the committee withdrew to consider their options. They were tired so they went bathing at a *Kund* (hot spring), a famous tourist attraction in Rajgir. By strange coincidence the owner of that highly desirable plot of land was visiting the *Kund* at the same time. On hearing that some people from Calcutta wanted to buy his land, he quickly finished bathing and went to meet them. Cordial relations were established and negotiations started and soon he was persuaded to sell. Once the land was acquired the members of the Calcutta community returned to Sadhvishri in triumph.

Settling into Rajgir

Sadhvishri's *chaturmas* for 1973 was scheduled to be in Jamshedpur. It had to be postponed so that proper preparations could begin in Rajgir to start the construction work of Veerayatan in the centenary year. The community was reluctant to allow Sadhvishri to spend her *chaturmas* in Rajgir due to the 'situation' there but finally they had to give in to her decision to go.

Ignoring all the discomforts and coping uncomplainingly with the lack of proper facilities, Sadhvishri and her group of sadhvis reached Rajgir on 11th July 1973 to reawaken the memory of Tirthankar Mahavir there. The place and people were unfamiliar to her, she was not there at the invitation of a devout community, neither did she have access to the most basic amenities, nevertheless this brave daughter of Tirthankar Mahavir resolutely settled in that holy land.

The first chaturmas of Rajgir was spent at the Shvetambar Kothi - a place two kilometers from the site of Veerayatan - where the manager Shri Jayanti Lal Jain was honoured to be of service to her. Despite the distances involved, Pujya Gurudev was

aware of every stage of the development of Veerayatan and blessed every step of the undertaking. From the very beginning of the chaturmas the great task of infusing new life into an ancient tradition began. Every day Sadhvishri, with her group of sadhvis, travelled to the site chosen for Veerayatan in the foothills of Vaibhargiri and paid homage to the memory of the shining souls who had gained nirvana in that sacred place. At the same time the work of raising the consciousness of the locals began on the lands of Veerayatan. The games of the naked little urchins in the area included teasing little birds, and killing the fish they found in the dirty water of ditches as well as in the purer waters of ponds and lakes. Part of Sadhvishri's daily routine was to teach them the lessons of love, kindness and compassion.

Laying the Foundation Stone

Each day before her trip to the Veerayatan site, Sadhvishri would address the pilgrims staying at the Kothis, explaining the significance of the project. They were often moved by her words and said, "The concept is indeed one of surpassing beauty. It marks the dawning of a new age. Only someone with far-seeing ideas like yourself is capable of accomplishing such a holy task!" However, these were mere words; they were not backed up by any action, and time was running out for the project.

The autumn of the centenary year 1973 arrived. It was also Gurudev's birthday, but there was not enough money to celebrate the event. Sadhvishri was still thinking about what could be done, when one morning she woke up to find Rs. 500/- on the floor in her room. No one could say where the money had come from. It seemed that providence had made it possible to celebrate Gurudev's birthday. Sadhvishri decided to use the money to distribute the guru's *prasad*. That day Shri Devraj Mehta came to seek an audience with Sadhvishri. With his generous contribution and with the help of the managers of both the Digambar and Shvetambar Kothis, Gurudev's birthday was celebrated for the first time in the holy land of the *samavasarana*. Though this sacred land still



lacked a source of water and proper roads, hundreds of people received and ate sweet foods there and proclaimed a victory for Mahavir.

On this great occasion of Gurudev's birthday, people saw the beginnings of the charitable works that would soon become the hallmark of Veerayatan. They were overwhelmed and, with this 'sweet' morsel, the sweet name of Veerayatan reached everyone's heart. It seemed as if Veerayatan's foundations had been laid, not with bricks and mortar, but with joy and giving.

The 25th centenary year of Tirthankar Mahavir's nirvana came to an end with the Diwali festivities of 1974. Large crowds of pilgrims were expected in Rajgir as they would be visiting the hallowed spot of Pavapuri from here on the last day of the nirvana year. Both the Digambar and Shvetambar Kothis were busy making preparations for the day. Accommodation was a problem, but even during this busy period, the generous manager of the Digambar Kothi, Shri Nem Kumarji, made rooms available for Sadhvishri and her disciples, so that they could complete their *chaturmas*. She followed the same daily routine as in her previous *chaturmas* and continued to work on the Veerayatan project. Each morning she would set out for the site of Veerayatan to oversee its development, before returning to Rajgir in the evening. Not even the changing seasons could affect her progress. The scorching sun and the baked earth witnessed the miracle of the determined pace and unflagging strength of her lotus-like feet, and winter itself seemed to thaw in the presence of her glittering soul.

Welfare Work

Welfare programmes now began at the Veerayatan site. The two devotees of Sadhvishri, Shobhna Kumari (now Sadhvi Shubhamji) and Vimal Kumari (now Sadhvi Vibhaji), carried on these programmes with great dedication. They took delight in teaching the local children every day. They would bathe them, comb their hair and keep them clean while teaching them moral and religious songs. They put their hearts

into their work, because one of the lines from Gurudev's poetry – *jo karna so achchha karna* - 'whatever you do in your life, do good', was echoing in their minds.

One day these pious women were returning to Rajgir from the site of Veerayatan as the sun was setting. Suddenly the sky darkened and stormy gusts of wind began to blow. Gurumata Shri Sumati Kunwarji continued to advance, instilling courage and fortitude in the others. But the worst was yet to come. Thoroughly drenched and buffeted from all sides by the storm, the sadhvis had reached the great banyan tree that stands at the entrance to Rajgir, when they were blinded by a dazzling light. A thunderbolt tearing through the sky had chosen just that moment to crash into the tree. By bearing the full brunt of the attack and ensuring that the sadhvis were unhurt, the tree seemed to be saying, "It is yours to perform much holier deeds than I, therefore may you live blissfully for a hundred years!" With its branches extended as if in benediction, the great tree, that had sheltered many generations, sank into the earth. Neither the horror of the storm, nor the battering of the banyan tree deterred the divine souls from their mission, and next day *Surya*, the sun god, saw them making their way back along the same storm-littered path.

The plans for Veerayatan were progressing gradually. Construction work was about to begin, but lack of water was proving an obstacle. Preparations were made to sink wells despite the surveyors' claim that there was no water anywhere on the site. How could this land that had so much faith invested in it, run dry? Sadhvishri was unperturbed. She turned to the Vaibhargiri, bathed in radiant light, then bending down, she touched the land – it was to the north west of the range - and with utter certainty said, "The well will be right here." Taking her word as a command, the devoted disciples and volunteers Shri Uttam Chandbhai Panchamiya, Shri Keshavbhai Khanderiya and Veerayatan's manager, Madan Singhji Nahar performed the ritual for the formal worship of the land. The workers immediately started digging a well at this consecrated spot. They had only dug

down about five feet, when water began to seep through into the hole. As the well got deeper, so did the problem of paying the workers' wages. There was no money for them, but Sadhvishri, a woman of tremendous faith, believed that everything would be settled by some means or other. She sustained the work at a steady pace.

The Path of Heroes is a Path of Thorns

Though the path was thorny, the ground uneven, and the days ahead difficult, Sadhvishri never tired, forging ahead at every stage. At eleven o'clock on the night of 11th April 1974, the group of sadhvis was attacked by a band of dacoits. Breaking down the door of the women's residence, these cloaked and hooded men, some wielding guns and some carrying heavy sticks, entered with fearsome shouts and carried off every single moveable object. They forced the sadhvis to hand over the keys to the office safe and cleared that out as well. As they left the house, these violent men beat that model of gentleness, Gurumata Shri Sumati Kunwarji Maharaj, who had come out to find Sadhvishri Chandanaji and to protect the other sadhvis. This outrage against such a holy person revealed the utter ruthlessness and fiendishness of the dacoits. After this awful experience, the sadhvis were left with no change of clothing, nor any food other than a *khichari* of red wheat. But the holy Ganges of their enthusiasm, instead of drying up, flowed yet faster, and the inner Gangotri glacier of their commitment remained as pure as ever.

When they heard about the disaster, many of the devotees gathered round and cried out, "Abandon Rajgir!" At that time Gurudev was in Benares on his way to Rajgir. He heard the news of the calamity that had befallen the sadhvis. His heart full of compassion, he immediately sent a letter to Sadhvishri with a disciple. It said, "Leave Rajgir. We will choose some other place." Sadhvishri replied to the Gurudev's message, "Pujya Gurudev, you know that your every word is my command! But a decision once made cannot be altered. Whatever has begun here with your blessing



cannot be brought to a halt now."

Eye Treatment

In her solitary moments of meditation at the holy spot of the *samavasarana*, and whilst



talking with the local people about their problems, Sadhvishri realised that the most common diseases in the area were those affecting the eyes. Providing cures for eye ailments thus became her highest priority. An important part of the programme of commemorative activities for the nirvana centenary became the opening of an eye camp. In the autumn of 1974, on Gurudev's birthday, it was decided that 250 operations would be performed at the first eye camp on the Veerayatan site. Obstacles now arose, yawning like hideous mouths about to swallow up all her efforts, but Sadhvishri remained steadfast. Every setback awoke new strengths in her.





The already sparsely populated area was further denuded of people in the summer when the fierce rays of the sun scorched the earth. On one such day a jeep appeared on the horizon. Some government officials were returning home after completing a survey up-country. From afar they saw a white-robed figure. They thought it was the goddess of the forest. They were intrigued. What manner of being was this? Had it emerged from the earth or descended from the sky? Full of wonder, they turned the



jeep in the direction of the figure. Curiosity conquered the heat and they even forgot their burning thirst. As the vehicle approached her, Sadhvishri greeted them courteously. The officials alighted from their jeep and bowed respectfully.

Graciously blessing them, Sadhvishri enquired why they were still working in the intense heat. The senior official replied, "I wanted to ask you the very same question". In a moment the initial barriers of reserve fell away and an atmosphere of mutual understanding was established. As they sat at Sadhvishri's feet in the delicate shade of a jujube tree, the government officers were told about the plans for Veerayatan. In Sadhvishri's inner radiance they glimpsed the presence of the divine and resolved to collaborate fully in the welfare activities of Veerayatan. Among the officials was the Director of the Public Works Division, Shri Kalal Sahib, who pledged his help. True to his word, he had a pipeline connected to the site of Veerayatan on the very eve of the opening of the eye camp, thus resolving the longstanding water problem.

In spite of his own illness, Shri Uttam Chandbhai Panchamiya of Calcutta came down to this isolated place and spent day and night ministering to the patients. Kumari Nirmala Gandhi, a very devoted disciple of Sadhvishri's, also performed remarkable services at this camp. Through the tireless efforts of the devotees, two hundred and fifty patients testified to the success of the camp by recovering their sight. Once again this 'land of inner light' delighted in bestowing sight. Since that first successful eye-camp the volunteers at Veerayatan have been continuously engaged in this work.

Construction Work Begins

Sadhvi Shri Yashaji, a model of devoted service, was like a shadow to Sadhvi Shri Chandanaji and kept pace with her in her daily round. She would come with Sadhvishri to the Veerayatan site every day. Sadhvi Yashaji applied herself to the task of construction and started to build a *kutiya* (small hut) there with an idea that one day the peerless *yogi* (seer) Pujya Gurudev could rest in it after he had been sitting and



meditating on rocks and hard ground. But stronger than constructive power is destructive energy. No sooner was she putting up the walls during the day than at night mischievous people took pleasure in pulling them down. This sequence of construction and destruction went on for some time.

But like Sadhvishri, Shri Yashaji was not one to admit defeat, and somehow or other the *kutiya* was finally completed, earning her the distinction of being declared an architect. Since then at least 60 buildings at Veerayatan testify to her excellence in this field. Without exaggeration she could well be called the *Vishvakarma*, or 'Celestial Architect' of Veerayatan.

Along with the *kutiya*, another small but was put up for the night-watchmen and caretakers of the site. Sadhvishri sometimes used this to relax in. One night whilst Sadhvishri was resting there with her Gurumata, a sudden violent gale hit the structure with such force that the entire thatch was stripped away and the main roof beam came crashing down upon them. When this happened, the watchmen were in an agony of uncertainty as to what to do. In a state of fear and trepidation they began to shout. Sadhvishri called out to them and assured them calmly, "Alkhanandan, do not worry, we are perfectly all right. We are trying to get out at the north end. You two try to lift the roof on that side." A few hours later, as a result of the men's hard work, Sadhvishri with her Gurumata emerged unharmed.

During this period, along with the construction of Veerayatan, an institute called Jain Bhavan was set up in Rajgir town in memory of the saintly Shri Jagjivanji Maharaj. It was built through the inspiration of Gurumata Sadhvishri Sumati Kunwarji Maharaj. Pujya Shri Jagjivanji Maharaj was very close to Gurudev's heart and their two souls were in perfect harmony. For a long time they had toured the east of India together, giving talks along the way. After thirty five days of *Santhara* – fasting unto death – this great ascetic and seer had been liberated from his body in the valley of

Udayagiri - the third in the range of Rajgir's mountains. The building of the Jain Bhavan was an act whereby the Jain communities of East India commemorated this great sage. This Jain Bhavan is known as 'Purva Bharat'. It is a fitting monument to the austere life lived by Shri Jagjivanji Maharaj.

The Saint of the Nation, Pujya Gurudev Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj, was nearing Rajgir. He had covered hundreds of miles on foot with his devoted disciples and reached the town on 18th June 1974. His arrival breathed new life and enthusiasm into all the disciples and volunteers.

One day, Pujya Gurudev, his disciple Pandit Shri Vijay Muniji, and the sadhvis, set off from Rajgir for the Veerayatan site. They came to Venuvan, a garden beloved of the Buddha, where a fabulous idol of him had been erected next to a beautiful pond. Here they offered their morning prayers and a sermon was delivered by Gurudev.

It was summertime, the sun was beating down mercilessly and the road was strewn with thorns and sharp pebbles. Everyone was tired and uncomfortable. To lighten the atmosphere, Pandit Shri Vijay Muniji Maharaj said to Sadhvishri, "Tai Maharaj (affectionate form of address for elder sister in Marathi), build Veerayatan as and when you can, but first you have to build a road to it. Look! Gurudev's feet are being lacerated by thorns and the other pilgrims are also suffering."

She replied, "Bhai Maharaj! Gurudev only



has to say the word and the road will be built. I was also thinking that a road between Venuvan and Veerayatan would be a great boon." Gurudev then said, "For Chandanaji, everything is possible, nothing is impossible." Taking his word as law, Sadhvishri spoke to the relevant officials

about the construction of the road and gave orders for a survey to be carried out.

It was agreed that if the boundary wall of Venuvan that adjoined the Circuit House could be moved to a spot 20 feet away, then a straight road through to Veerayatan could be built at little cost. A bulldozer was needed for the task. It was Kumari Nirmala Gandhi, one of Veerayatan's best-loved workers, who arranged for one to be brought. It moved the wall with ease. Now another problem arose. A bridge had to be built over the waters of the *Ushnakund*, a stream running from a hot spring that brings much needed irrigation to that area. The locals were resistant to change. It brought up all their deep-seated prejudices. But solving problems is second nature to Sadhvishri and she was soon able to overcome their resistance. She opened the floodgates of her own empathy and compassion, and bathed in this 'healing stream', the villagers were soon won over and their fears were completely dissolved. They joyfully assented to her plan and the bridge was built; the road, albeit unpaved, went straight from Rajgir through Venuvan to Veerayatan.

Construction materials for Veerayatan could now be brought in by tractor. Cement had



not yet been procured so the walls were made of a mixture of mud and lime. First priority was given to the construction of a *'Shrut-Sambodhi'* to the north and a *'Prematantra'* to the south. Sadhvishri and her group of sadhvis decided to move into Veerayatan and they took up residence in the buildings even before they had been completed. Inadequate security and the lack of amenities did not deter them. They were

willing to spend the night in a place that most people were afraid to visit even in daylight. This was a new side to their bravery. Pilgrims would come to seek a blessing and then rush off as soon as they could to get away from this dangerous area, but Sadhvishri and her sadhvis made their home in this desolate place and stayed there day and night.

There were still many obstacles to overcome. Building work was already under way when an order from the government, calling a halt to further construction on the site, was received. Nevertheless, the sun of Sadhvishri's zest pierced the dark clouds of the government order and broke through to light up the horizon again. Discussions were held with the Central Government's Archaeology Bureau. On December 12th 1975, its director, Mr. Deshpande, visited Veerayatan with his colleagues. He had meetings with Pujya Gurudev and Sadhvishri. In the course of the discussions, he said to Sadhvishri, "Even if my son had constructed these buildings, I would still bulldoze them." Sadhvishri laughed and said, "Deshpandeji, this is not the work of a son but the work of a guru. You cannot bulldoze the work of a guru. These buildings are the dwelling place for *shramans*, and since Tirthankar Mahavir was a *shraman*, we his disciples are *shramans* too. The abode of a *shraman* is the abode of hard work, so you should not have any objection to this construction." Impressed by the depth of Gurudev's and Sadhvishri's knowledge and the strength of their acumen, the Director immediately issued a permit for construction to proceed.

Pujya Gurudev now came to stay at the *Shrut-Sambodhi*. Surrounded by the four walls of this building which was still open to the sky, he spent most of his day there in deep meditation with nothing to trouble him. But at night, he was beset by a continuous shower of stones thrown by people from outside. Gurudev remained impervious. The stones came thick and fast and piled up all around him but he was in no way disturbed. This barrage went on for months, but it was as if the Vaibhargiri had taken him under its protection and not a

single stone or pebble touched this extraordinary sage.

Though government permission had been received, Sadhvishri still had to win over the hearts and minds of the local people. It is one thing to construct a building but quite another to 'build up' a man. Sadhvishri's real aim was not only to create concrete structures but also to raise men's consciousness. All her efforts were directed at weaning people off immoral activities and persuading them to take up ethical and worthwhile tasks. Those who were used to stealing and snatching away other people's food and belongings were taught that it is better to earn one's own bread. In this respect they were actually provided with gainful employment. But often such teachings are hard to understand and people did not see their relevance. Not only that, Sadhvishri was seen as an outsider who had to be driven away at all costs, and to achieve this, they played all sorts of dirty tricks on her.
One day a group of villagers armed with an assortment of sticks and other makeshift weapons turned up and encircled Sadhvishri and her sadhvis. They hurled threats and insults. They tried to provoke a reaction but Sadhvishri remained a model of patience and tolerance. She signalled for the other sadhvis to remain quiet and the 'war of words' remained a one-sided battle. The very lack of opposition seemed to infuriate the villagers even more. It appeared that at any moment blows from the sticks being brandished by them would fall on the heads of these defenceless women. But the tranquillity of the sadhvis was so powerful and their faces so filled with compassion that the attackers slowly lost sight of their purpose and began to doubt their actions. Their spirits tamed, they became calm and peaceful. It was as if Sadhvishri had absorbed the burning flames of their anger and turned it into sweetness.

"Oh my beloved brother villagers", she said, "sit down with me. I have been wanting to meet you and I am obliged that you have come to me yourselves. Tirthankar Mahavir has left a message that I would like to pass on to you. It is a short message, but an important one. It is about friendliness, about

befriending others so as to make our own lives happier. Our relationship with you is one of friendship. We are not strangers but your friends, let us share each other's joys and sorrows and work together to improve our common lot."

This gentle 'shower of sweetness' washed away the villagers' aversion and dissolved their anger. Their hearts were touched and they were confident that no harm would befall them. Sadhvishri had transformed discord into concord and a thicket of spears into a banner of victorious reconciliation, and demonstrated the teachings of Tirthankar Mahavir about love and compassion in a most practical way. Her message is a highly relevant one for our time: Don't just 'live and let live', but live and help others in living their lives.

Ahimsa Conquers

It was on this land that Tirthankar Mahavir proclaimed his message of ahimsa: *abhavō pātthivā! tubbhaṃ abhayadāyā bhavāhi ya* – 'O king! I grant you fearlessness, therefore be fearless. Then you too can grant fearlessness to others and so not harm any living creature.' Now Sadhvishri is trying to make this land, once permeated with Tirthankar Mahavir's fearlessness, fearless again.

Time and again hunters would scour the area late at night in search of game. Sadhvishri would track them down, confront them, and facing death herself by standing in front of their vehicles, would attempt to save the innocent animals. At moments like this, the furious hunters would not hesitate to point their guns at this unarmed woman. "Get out of our way if you care for your life", they would shout. She would stand firm and say, "My brothers! My life is not at issue here, but I am deeply concerned about the lives of other creatures. You have it in your power to protect them and grant them fearlessness. Don't spread death, give them life." Sadhvishri's fearlessness always made a tremendous impact on the hunters, who were usually intoxicated with their violent sport. Her voice sobered them up like a splash of cold water and they would loosen the grip on their weapons. These deeds of

Sadhvishri's were inspired by that model of austerity, Tapomurti Shri Rambha Kunwarji Maharaj and the compassionate Gurumata Sumati Kunwarji Maharaj. Sadhvishri's dedicated efforts were crowned with success and gave back to this holy spot its reputation as the 'home of ahimsa'.

Gradually devout followers began to be attracted to the restored glory of the land and many of them started to arrive at this hallowed spot. The Mayor of Agra, Shri Lala Kalyandasji, was a true devotee of Pujya Gurudev and an industrious voluntary worker. When he was on his way to visit Sadhvishri, Dadaguru Shri Prithvi Chandraji Maharaj said to him, "Speak your mind, but do as Sadhvishri says." Shri Nanhe Babu of Agra, Calcutta's Shri Naginbhai Shah and Chhotubhai Gandhi, together with Jaipur's Shri Sagarmalji Daga have all remained single-minded devotees of Pujya Gurudev. They had always been conscientious supporters of the institution; they now became leading figures in the progress of Veerayatan.

The number of supporters slowly increased as the consequences of one inspired individual connecting with another spread out like the ripples in a pond. The doors of co-operation opened up one after the other. Every day a new chapter was added to the Veerayatan story. It seemed as if Time itself stood still for a while to marvel at Veerayatan's progress before ticking on. Every brick used in the construction seemed to cry out, "What am I doing here in this jungle?" Sadhvishri's silent answer would be, "Rise up and raise the walls, the answer will come of its own accord." Her selfless devotion and sacrifice was such that even in their infancy Veerayatan's activities began to raise paeans of praise in faraway places. Another *chaturmas* took place at Bhavanipur in Calcutta, in 1977. Veerayatan's supporters and admirers published a souvenir of Veerayatan to commemorate the hosting of the *chaturmas*.

The Diksha Ceremony

The year 1978 was very important for Veerayatan as three great celebrations were held consecutively on March 8th, 9th and 10th. Two thousand five hundred years ago, on the historical land of Gunashil Park, situated in the foothills of Vaibhargiri, thousands of spiritual aspirants had taken *diksha* in Mahavir's order. Once again this inspirational renunciation ceremony was being seen in the land of Veerayatan. Many people from different parts of the country were rewarded by this magnificent sight. The fifth anniversary of Veerayatan's foundation was celebrated on March 8th, while March 9th marked the Silver Jubilee of Darshanacharya Sadhvishri Chandanaji's ordination as a sadhvi. On the following day, March 10th, three *dikshas* were held at Veerayatan. Kumari Vimal and Kumari Shobhna dedicated their lives to the order of Tirthankar Mahavir and became the disciples of Sadhvi Shri Chandanaji Maharaj. The name Sadhvi Vibhaji was conferred on Kumari Vimal, and the name Sadhvi Shubamji was given to Kumari Shobhna. Kumar Dayaram was called Devapriya Muniji and he became the disciple of Shri Jinesh Muniji.

These holy celebrations of *diksha* helped to increase awareness of the purity of Veerayatan's objectives in people's minds and deepen their appreciation of its activities. This newly-defined image of Jainism was making Veerayatan a centre of attraction. The development of Veerayatan was thus a step in the renaissance of Jainism in Bihar. More and more eye-camps were held and their success brought trust and respect for Veerayatan from the common people. As the fame of the camps spread, the number of patients coming for treatment increased. This selfless service benefitted people from Bihar and those from far-off states alike.

Foresight

The following incident happened in the winter of 1978, when, as in every year, an eye-camp was held at Veerayatan. Rajendra Singh Surana from Agra, his close family and friends and members of the 'Agra Mahila Mandal' worked hard at the camp. In

all, 1,200 operations were carried out. In those days both eyes had to remain bandaged for three days following the operation and patients were housed in tents. The work was carried out not just as a philanthropic gesture but was performed with faith and devotion. Volunteers put their heart and soul, not to mention their monetary resources, into the work. Sadhvishri became engrossed in the activities of the camp. She spent time with both doctors and patients, and helped



instruct the volunteers. During the evening, prayers and discourses were arranged for patients and their carers.

On the third night at the camp the volunteers were busy at their work and patients were resting comfortably on beds under canvas. It was a wonderfully peaceful evening. There was no apparent cause for alarm but Sadhvishri's face was showing signs of anxiety. She went to Gurudev and said, "Pujya Gurudev, today my mind is strangely troubled. Everything looks peaceful enough on the surface, but I have a feeling that unless we keep alert and on our guard something unexpected might happen." Gurudev said, "I think you are right. Follow your intuition, and do whatever needs to be done as quickly as possible."

Sadhvishri took only a second to decide, and then sent a message to all the pilgrims to vacate their rooms so that the patients could be moved indoors. She got them to put all their belongings in an empty room and asked them to stay put on the veranda; only patients were allowed in the rooms. People were not very happy with this announcement. It seemed tyrannical, almost 'Hitler-like' to them, but faith does not

make an 'Aruni' of us all. Actually the anger of the pilgrims was quite natural, but Sadhvishri did not have time to explain. "Just do what I tell you," she said. Her manner of dealing with the situation quieted them, and soon a long queue of men and women holding hands with each other, their eyes heavily bandaged, were ushered to safety. Devoted volunteers stood by to help them.

As the last patient was moved into shelter, the weather changed completely and a huge storm approached. Suddenly great gusts of wind blew up, torrential rain sheeted down and enormous hail stones fell. Soon not a trace of the canvas encampment remained. It rained throughout the night. The following day at sunrise tranquillity appeared to have been restored and everything looked clean and fresh again. The people's anger too had disappeared. Even the most hardened sceptic was filled with wonder at the miraculous way in which the patients had been saved. Irreparable damage might have been the result had patients with bandaged eyes been exposed to the rigours of the storm.

Thinking ahead, Sadhvishri realised that it would not be possible to hold eye-camps in such circumstances again. She felt that instead of resorting to ad hoc measures to house the patients, a permanent solution to the problem had to be found. She sat at Gurudev's feet and vowed that till a proper hospital was constructed, she would accept only two food items in her meals.

Religious Tours

The objectives of Veerayatan are service to humanity *(seva)*, education *(shiksha)*, and spiritual development *(sadhna)*. These are the founding principles of the institution and their extraordinary combination makes Veerayatan an inspiring organisation. Sadhvishri considered the progress of Veerayatan to be her primary goal but understood the need to awaken religious awareness in other places. With Gurudev's blessing she decided to spend her *chaturmases* elsewhere as well.

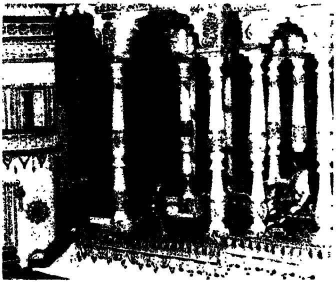
In 1980, in response to a longstanding

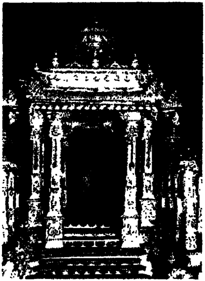
invitation from the Jain community of Jharia in Bihar, Sadhvishri and her disciples walked all the way (nearly 350 miles) to conduct the *chaturmas* there. This *chaturmas* was extremely important for the residents of Jharia, as it gave them the opportunity to listen to thought-provoking talks that raised new issues and opened the doors to further understanding. 'Sumati Mahila Mandal', a women's organisation, and a youth league were set up. Throughout the *chaturmas*, her words had a tremendous impact on huge crowds of people, both Jain and non-Jain, and they developed a deep love and respect for her.

In 1984, as the Jain community in Punjab became increasingly uneasy because of an outbreak of terrorist attacks due to sectarian hatred, Sadhvishri sought Gurudev's permission to travel to the region. She was the first sadhvi to support them and calm their fears. Meanwhile, the Jain community in the rest of the country was making arrangements for the evacuation of the sadhus and sadhvis from Punjab. Many families were simply fleeing the area, leaving



all their possessions behind. Amidst all this chaos, Sadhvishri arrived there and said, "Ahimsa does not mean fleeing in fear, it means standing firm. Ahimsa does not teach cowardice; it teaches courage. Ahimsa is the way of the great hero Mahavir." She went to the Golden Temple and courageously preached the gospel of friendship and non-violence. This act of hers gave people strength and fortitude to confront the situation with their heads held high.









Shri Brahmi Kala Mandiram: The Museum

Through her religious tours Sadhvishri was spreading her Guru's groundbreaking ideas far and wide. During the course of her travels she noticed that the practice of religion had become empty and moribund. There was no growth, no expansion; ritual was everything. If the new generation were to learn about their religion, it would need to be instilled in them in an inspiring and attractive way. It ought to be stimulating intellectually and enlightening spiritually. One of the most effective methods of winning over the younger generation might be to use works of art in the teaching of religious principles. So with her wonderful range of artistic talents, Sadhvishri designed and built a magnificent museum called the 'Shri Brahmi Kala Mandiram', where inspiring exhibits present stories containing a spiritual message.

This method of teaching through miniature tableaux and other works of art has proved very successful. It offers an easy and enjoyable introduction to history, culture and religion. Here you can experience something of the lives of those who have blazed a trail for us. The display appeals to the aesthetic sense of the onlooker and evokes an instinctive feeling of reverence. The exhibition could in fact be called a 'library', where without any distinction of gender, race, age or literacy,



knowledge is easily accessible to all.

Viewing this Brahmi Kala Mandiram, visitors spontaneously murmur words of appreciation. Their spirit cries out - *adyābhavat saphalatā nayanadvayasya* - 'It is a wonderful feast for the eyes. We are so moved by it'. Visitors want to know who set up this wonderful display, who thought it up, where these ideas came from. And with a feeling of awe, people offer up their heartfelt congratulations at seeing such a splendid creation.

When these questions were put to Sadhvishri, the creator of the exhibits, she said: "This is just an expression of my inner feelings. This work is the translation of things I have seen in my mind's eye. It just happened naturally. I really saw them and they just came into being of their own accord." Sadhvishri's artistic eye sees beauty and purpose even in dry leaves, bamboo stems, twigs and other ordinary everyday things. In the same way that she loses all sense of time and bodily existence when immersed in study or mediation, similarly she is released from such constraints in her aesthetic creations.

Shri Brahmi Kala Mandiram is named after Brahmi, who was well-versed in the arts and was the daughter of the first Tirthankar, Shri Rishabhdev. Visitors are enraptured by the eye-catching scenes from the lives of the Tirthankars displayed in the museum. History comes alive here. Here the transcendent is made tangible, the sublime acquires substance and stories take shape. This outpouring of artistic endeavour all became possible with the blessings of Pujya Gurudev and to mark his 82nd birthday, Shri Brahmi Kala Mandiram was inaugurated in 1982 amidst great rejoicing.

Netra Jyoti Seva Mandiram : The Eye Hospital

While one side of Sadhvishri's nature was finding expression in the Shri Brahmi Kala Mandiram, the other was taking form in the shape of the eye hospital. If the museum gives us a glimpse of the beauty of Sadhvishri's vision, then the eye clinic is the concrete expression of her compassion. She continued

to deny herself certain foods for the time it took to complete the eye hospital building.
The process of acquiring the land and the actual task of building the hospital was a lengthy and laborious one. Sadhvishri, however, has unlimited energy; for her, work is worship and to work for others is one of the highest forms of spiritual exercise. When Tirthankar Mahavir was asked what the results of performing *seva* (service) were, he replied that by doing *seva* one could attain the most exalted position, namely that of a Tirthankar. He considered *seva* as an internal *tapa* - a means of purifying one's soul. Selfless service is both life's inner essence as well as the outward sign of a person's progress on the path of spiritual development. *Seva* broadens one's thinking to encompass the idea of welfare for all.



Seva was the spur for the setting up of eye camps every year in public buildings such as schools, rest houses, and *dharmashalas*. At the same time construction of the eye hospital at Veerayatan was going on. Gurumata Shri Sumati Kunwarji Maharaj would arrive at the beginning of every eye camp and teach the patients and villagers how to live their lives in a better manner. She taught the precepts of ahimsa in a stimulating and interesting way. This work of hers continued every day the camp was held. The result was that many people stopped hunting, eating meat, sacrificing animals and drinking alcohol. Instead, they dedicated their lives to upholding the principle of non-violence. Though well past her 80th year, the Gurumata still continues this work steadfastly.

With Gurudev's blessing, the construction of the eye-hospital was completed in 1987 and named Netra Jyoti Seva Mandiram. It was inaugurated on January 26th 1987, Sadhvishri's 51st birthday, by Dr. L.N. Jones, the Chairman of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind in London. One



hundred thousand eye operations had already been successfully performed under the eye treatment program of Veerayatan. Along with the eye hospital, treatment for polio was also started up.

The humanitarian efforts of Veerayatan have brought it goodwill from many quarters. The people of Bihar are especially grateful for the services they receive from Veerayatan. "Veerayatan," they say, "is not just a religious centre, it is sacred to the cause of humanitarianism as well. It celebrates a life where compassion and non-violence are not just words but concrete actions." Those who come weighed down with sorrow and pain return home joyfully unburdened, carrying only bliss in their hearts.

Veerayatan has become synonymous with service. On one hand it inspires people to do noble deeds through the medium of art, whilst on the other, different voluntary services improve people's welfare. Sadhvi Shri Chandanaji has been performing the great task of Veerayatan with total faith and devotion. Without any desire for fame or glory, she simply followed what Pujya Gurudev had envisioned. Such an enormous task carried out on difficult terrain in adverse circumstances by a single Jain sadhvi is indeed a remarkable achievement.

In Honour of Women

On January 26th, 1987 Pujya Gurudev, Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj conferred on Sadhvishri Chandanaji the exalted rank of Acharya, an honour previously only accorded to men. By raising a sadhvi to this rank, he redefined the traditions of the Jain religion. Veerayatan's former president, Shri Baba - Navalmalji Firodia - and other respected scholars paved the way for this historic occasion by gracing the ceremony with their presence. Shri Baba was such a phenomenal man that Pujya Gurudev said about him: *jānanti tattvaṃ prabhavanti kartum*, 'Here is a man who not only knows and understands, but also has strength to carry out good works.'

By elevating Sadhvishri to the position of

Acharya, Gurudev has re-invigorated the teachings of Tirthankar Mahavir. Although woman has always been the Muse for poets, artists, writers and scholars and central to the success of their creativity, nevertheless women themselves could never attain these high positions in society as a whole. By chance, if any woman through sheer strength of will, hard-work and fortitude, manages to perform some great deed, all women share in the glory of her achievement. One woman's success becomes proof of the untapped potential of every woman. A woman reaching the peak of success is a great challenge to tradition.

Tirthankar Mahavir founded the fourfold order *(chaturvidh sangh)*, and made Arya Chandana, the head of the order of sadhvis (there were 36,000 at the time). However, in the Middle Ages, due to a male-dominated culture, the position of Acharya was not conferred on any sadhvi. What Gurudev did was epoch-making; not only had he thought about changing the norm, he had also broken with rigid tradition by this courageous act. In 1951, he had taken a similar step. At the 'Sadadi Conference', when the *Shraman-Sangh* was being formed, and the code of conduct for sadhus and sadhvis was being drawn up, the sadhvis were not even consulted. In fact they were actually prohibited from joining in the discussion. One of the sadhvijis, Gurumata Shri Sumati Kunwarji Maharaj had raised her voice in protest, saying that sadhvis ought to be involved in discussions which directly affected their way of life. Gurudev listened to her and through his authoritative handling of the situation, sadhvis from then on were allowed to participate in conference discussions, especially on issues concerning them.

Gurudev was a reformer, he inspired a revolution. He tore away the veils of blind faith and ignorance and revealed the light of truth. Among the many other innovative steps he took was one of raising the position of women and honouring womankind. He said that in Tirthankar Mahavir's *chaturvidh-sangh* - the fourfold order of sadhus, sadhvis, shravaks and shravikas - all are equal and play equally vital roles. If Tirthankar

Mahavir recognised women *Arhants*, then why should there not be female Acharyas and Upadhyayas? All these positions are based on inner qualities and knowledge, not on gender. Soul has no gender. In the Jain religion, the inner virtues are honoured, not the outer shell.

At the ceremony where the title of Acharya was conferred on her, Sadhvishri Chandanaji said, "I accept this honour to honour all women." The title of Acharya has enhanced her capacity to expand the teachings of the *Jinas* in a more effective way, but it was her own inner fitness, her abstinence, self-control, fearlessness and independence that earned her the honour in the first place. Her life has been an inspiration to many. It is as if her energy, her life-force, has lit the lamp of religion, and its light is spreading in all directions. Such a personality knows no bounds.

Education

The task of educating local children began with Veerayatan's inception in 1973. A few years later the Veerayatan Shiksha Niketan School was formally opened. Shri Kundanmal Parekh of Delhi played a major role in bringing this about. Many children have received primary education at this



school. The teaching of ethics and morals is a special feature of the curriculum; this has now spread to many other local schools and benefits even more children. Acharya Shri Chandanaji thinks that children are like clay to be shaped; if they are taught the values of non-violence, compassion, friendship and mutual co-operation right from the start, then their characters will be moulded in the right way. Sadhvi Shubhamji, along with other sadhvis, associates and helpers, goes to many schools to motivate children and show them the way.

Those who have vision can 'see through' any event. One day Acharya Shriji saw some children fishing in a dirty ditch. When she tried to stop them, the children said, "We are hungry. What else can we eat?" She realised that the children were right. If they had had some food in their stomachs they might have been able to understand the meaning of ahimsa. At that time, Veerayatan was conducting educational programmes in many schools throughout the area. She felt that there was no point in trying to educate a few when thousands lacked food. As a result she conceived of the 'Sudhashanam' programme to feed, clothe and educate children en masse.



Sudhashanam is an appealing way of educating growing children into acquiring good habits and moral values. Schools in Rajgir and nearby areas receive nutritious vegetarian food in addition to teaching materials. Ethical precepts are instilled in the children with a view to persuading them to respect vegetarian principles. The programme has been widely implemented and thousands of children are still benefiting from it.

Veerayatan's educational work is expanding every day. Many young people have been helped by Veerayatan to find a direction in life and they are making excellent progress. Acharya Shriji has always had a dream of seeing that inhabitants of the land sacred to the Tirthankars should be well-fed and educated and receive proper medical attention. Her own tireless efforts have gone a long way to turning this into a reality. She is concerned for the individual progress and welfare of every single child she sees. How will this child develop? How will he or she face life's challenges? Because of her affection for children, her birthday, January

26th, is celebrated as Children's Day at Veerayatan. As this is the cause dearest to her heart, an eye-camp specially for children is organised on her birthday every year. Each child is given a complete health check and the schools hold sports and other competitions to encourage the children and raise their morale.

Among the other important educational activities of Veerayatan is the dissemination of Prakrit. At the time of the nirvana centenary, Gurudev had suggested we revive the language of our scriptures. Later on, Veerayatan's former chairman, Shri Baba, took it upon himself to develop this branch of education which Gurudev had called the 'Sanmati Tirth'. Under Shri Baba's direction, degree courses for Prakrit studies began in Pune. Shri Baba also started co-ordinating the compilation of a Prakrit dictionary. Many scholars are collaborating on this project. After the great soul of Shri Baba departed this life, his son Shri Abhay Kumar Firodia, Veerayatan's present chairman, continues to encourage and support these activities.

Gyananjali: The Library

Education and service to humanity are two of the three aims that find expression at Veerayatan through a variety of activities. However, it is the third objective, spiritual development, not easily definable as an activity, but practiced intrinsically, that is the motivating force behind the rapid progress



in all the other fields. The beginnings of this spiritual dimension reside in the Gyananjali - the library. Although it houses 20,000 volumes in different languages on Jainism, Buddhism and the Vedic religion, it is not only a collection of books, but also a 'living temple of wisdom' - a 'Shrut Mandir' - that opens up new vistas of knowledge every day.

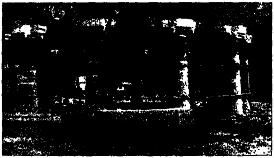
Pujya Gurudev was deeply immersed in learning. His every moment was devoted to study and introspection. The collection of books, writings, treatises and scriptures, which Gurudev had gathered throughout his life, became the core of the Gyananjali's collection. It was brought to Veerayatan from Agra with the greatest of care, so that aspiring scholars could prepare for attaining that vital combination of knowledge and spirituality. Having studied in this way, they would then travel the world to spread the tenets of Tirthankar Mahavir's philosophy. Gurudev's vibrant presence set the project in motion.

The texts in the Gyananjali have been classified and catalogued on computer. They are set out in a spacious hall in an elegant way and are easily accessible. The library building is dedicated to the memory of Gurubhai Shri Amolak Muniji Maharaj who, as an obedient disciple, was like Gurudev's shadow. At the north-facing entrance to the Gyananjali building is a statue of the goddess of learning, Saraswati. Every scholar - a Hindu pundit, a Buddhist monk or a Christian pastor - is welcome without discrimination to pursue his/her studies among these great works in this atmosphere so conducive to learning.

Shri Amar Sarvato Bhadram: The Meditation Centre

In the peace of Veerayatan's splendid natural surroundings, a magnificent meditation centre named Shri Amar Sarvato Bhadram is being built. The presence of Gurudev will be felt here and, in the tranquillity of its atmosphere, spiritual seekers will be able to meditate on the illuminating of their inner world. They will be able to follow the path envisaged by Gurudev and so share, even if for a moment, in his matchless felicity.

Veerayatan's vice-chairman, Shri Ashokji Surana who, following family tradition, has been a devotee of Dadaguru Shri Prithvi Chandraji Maharaj, and Honorary Secretary, Shri Tansukh Rajji Daga, whose remarkable services to the cause should not be forgotten, with the help of many other devotees, are actively engaged in completing this project.



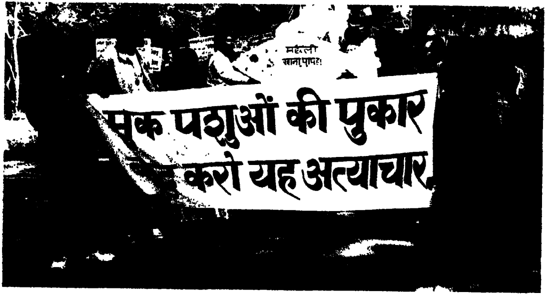
Veerayatan is totally unique. Some organisations perform humanitarian services, some are committed to raising the consciousness of people and educating them, while yet others devote their energy to realising the ultimate truth through the path of knowledge. Veerayatan encompasses them all. It is like the confluence of all these different streams of *sadhna* (spiritual development). Keeping in mind the different capacities of each human being, a number of different paths to the attainment of spiritual perfection has been found. It is not possible to have only one path for all. Everyone has to choose a way towards spirituality according to his or her own nature. Veerayatan presents opportunities for everyone in the ashram to follow the type of *sadhna* best suited to his/her personality.

The Ethos of Vegetarianism

The branches of this banyan tree that is Veerayatan are spreading upwards and outwards with the roots taking a firm hold. The inspirational services offered by Veerayatan are restoring the holy land of the Tirthankars to its pristine glory. From village to village in Bihar, the gospel is spreading, 'Eating fish is a sin, eating meat is brutal, sacrificing animals is inhuman!' Proclaiming these heartfelt exhortations, the community of sadhvis is slowly bringing about a change in local people's values and conduct. The work of spreading the message, 'Vegetarianism is all' is carried out






पशुओं की पुकार
करो यह अत्याचार

in Rajgir and nearby villages with great dedication. The children of Bihar are adding



their voices to that of the sadhvis. A beautiful exposition of this programme is the grand rally held every year in which thousands of children vow to become vegetarian. Gurudev's vision – of bringing Tirthankar Mahavir's message of ahimsa to the masses - that he saw on *Sharad Purnima* night in the hills of Vaibhargiri in 1962, is slowly turning into reality.



Two thousand five hundreds years ago Tirthankar Mahavir gave a clarion call to the people of Bihar. Over the years, due to many adverse circumstances, the strains of the call have become fainter and fainter. However, twenty five years ago, the call was taken up again with renewed vigour and sung with the same resounding note by Pujya Gurudev. Veerayatan reverberates to that sound and the echoes of ahimsa and compassion are heard everywhere.

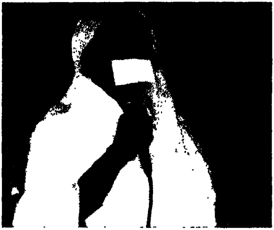
The Extension of Veerayatan's Activities

The holy land of Tirthankar Mahavir, the spiritual home of Gurudev, and the site of Acharya Chandanaji's selfless deeds, Veerayatan has now become a veritable

garden filled with flowers, creepers and blossoming trees, where the devotees come to suck like bees at the sweet nectar of religion. Veerayatan is like a lotus that, on opening, wafts a breeze fragrant with its perfume in all directions. Visitors from all parts of the country as well as abroad come to seek solace at Veerayatan.

Several years ago, some people from America visited Veerayatan. They listened to Gurudev's sermons and heard Acharya Shri's progressive ideas. They were impressed by the amount of humanitarian work done at Veerayatan. They asked Acharya Shriji to visit them in the United States. After a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, their efforts succeeded. For her, love, friendship and good feelings were all that mattered and the boundaries between nations were secondary. To spread the word of Gurudev to a wider audience, Acharya Shri Chandanaji left India for the first time to visit the U.S.A in 1987.

During her tour in America, she gave some magnificent talks and showered the land with sweetness and poignancy. The younger



generation, brought up in a consumer society inundated with images and the bright lights of Hollywood, were touched by this inspirational and energetic guru. It seemed as if they were being bathed by the triple streams of *seva*, *shiksha*, and *sadhna* and consecrated in the holy Ganges of Veerayatan. Her sermons were so well-reasoned and 'of the moment' that these highly intelligent and lively young people were deeply affected by their relevance and eager to spread the word. "Every nation and every city should know about these life-enhancing principles that you have

presented to us," they said.

Religion through the medium of Acharya Shri's words captivated those in her vicinity and changed the course of their lives. For Indians living in the U.S.A., a glimpse of true religion was a novel experience which set in motion a process of self-examination among them. They wished for the dissemination of these new ideas worldwide and the establishment of Veerayatan centres throughout the world.

In 1993 Acharya Shri attended the Chicago World Conference of Religions as the representative of Jainism. There, with the help of devotees, she founded Veerayatan International. This institution works like a *setu* or bridge helping to bring the West and East closer together.

Acharya Shri's message for Indians living abroad is, "Show the culture and values of your motherland in an attractive light by conducting yourselves well and living a pure life. At the same time, learn about the ideas of the West and assimilate its knowledge and resources in the service of India." Veerayatan International's members are spreading Veerayatan's message in America, Canada and other countries while at the same time helping Veerayatan to take great strides forward in the holy land of the Tirthankars.

In 1995, Acharya Shriji built a second Brahmi Kala Mandiram, unique in its own right, at the Jain temple in the British city of Leicester. Here too, the lives of the Tirthankars and other inspirational events of the Jain religion are presented through three dimensional panels. It has become a noteworthy sight in the area. Whilst Acharya Shriji was in England, Veerayatan U.K. was set up with its headquarters in London.

Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth : The School for Jainism

Acharya Shri Chandanaji has been spreading Mahavir's message of non-violence, love, compassion and friendship to far-off countries for over ten years now. She has studied in depth the social problems of expatriate families and the cultural clashes they face. On one hand she sees the





increasingly spiritual inclination of the older generation, whilst on the other she observes how the young are drifting away from their own culture, however intrigued they may be by it. This causes her to think that one day's torrential rain will not make this crop grow; rather a continuous gentle drizzle is required to make the seeds germinate.

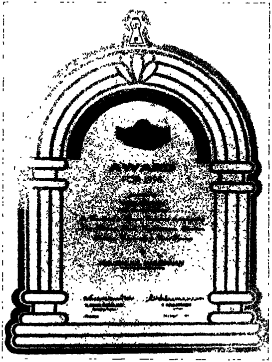
Acharya Shri Chandanaji realised that a brief visit to a country may temporarily satisfy the spiritual thirst of the people, but it will not bring about a permanent change. Consequently she decided that more time should be devoted to teaching in other countries. Her beloved disciple, scholar Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji, who is well-versed in both the wisdom of the ancients and a knowledge of the modern world, has been entrusted with the responsibility of carrying the good work abroad. The result has been that for both children and grown ups, indeed for all, a new chapter of spirituality has opened up in their lives. Acharya Shri's foresight is now bearing fruit. With the efforts of Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji, Veerayatan U.K. has set up Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth in London – a school where many children, teenagers and adults learn Jainism in a structured way. This organised study of the religion has now spread from North London to South London, Manchester and to other centres in England. Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth has also been set up in Africa.

Acharya Shriji's Disciples

The knowledge and wisdom granted to Acharya Shriji by her beneficent revered guru, Pujya Gurudev Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj, has been enhanced by her own talents and in turn passed on to her disciples. She has motivated her disciples to study medicine, administration, engineering and many other fields of modern endeavour as well as instilling in them the ancient wisdom of the Tirthankars and Acharyas. In this way she has shown that sadhvis can be doctors, administrators, and engineers, as well as professors and teachers. This is a guru who gives her disciples the power to become gurus themselves. It is easy to build buildings but much more complex to 'build' the builders. Acharya Shriji creates the finest life-like models for the Kala Mandiram, but she is also the 'moulder' of those living models, her disciples. Just like a work of art reflects the artist, a disciple reflects his/her guru.

Accolades for Veerayatan

Whatever Acharya Shriji has done has been done selflessly. For her the deed is its own reward. The satisfaction of seeing her disciples growing and developing is everything to her. Spreading Tirthankar









Mahavir's message is her joy. The famous 'Bhagwan Mahavir Foundation' of Madras has accorded her its highest honour. They are very impressed with her determination to carry through her programmes, and astonished at the list of her achievements. By presenting the award to such a person, it was almost as if the award itself were being honoured.

The founding of Veerayatan in Bihar was not just a matter of spreading Tirthankar Mahavir's beliefs but also of making the land of Magadh fertile again so that it would give birth to many Mahavirs. This enormous task was made possible by individuals working hard and trusting in their own strength rather than being dependent on others. The spirit of self-reliance turned this desolate spot into a veritable heaven on earth. It is progressive thoughts and practical deeds like these which have in the short span of 25 years brought Veerayatan to the heights of success. Veerayatan is not so much a place but more an idea and its proliferation is irresistible. A location or place, however, is also needed, so that good works can be carried out and thoughts and ideas can be passed on to individuals. More and more branches of Veerayatan are being set up around the world to fulfil this purpose. Navalveerayatan is being established in Pune. In Bangalore, Ratnagiri and Ahmedabad, Veerayatan institutes are to be started up in the near future. England, America, Canada and Africa have already seen the opening of Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth. In this way the 'great banyan' is growing and more and more people are coming under the protective shade of its mighty canopy.

The story ofVeerayatan's construction is one of many sacrifices. It is the fruit of profound austerity, dedication and endurance. It is a process of re-igniting the light of the Tirthankars in the land of their origin, and re-establishing the glory of these prophets there. Many streams of devotion by countless people are merged here; many people, like offerings of flowers, have dedicated their lives to this cause. It has won the hearts of thousands of people and is supported by innumerable souls, and is

ornamented by the industrious work of all its devotees. Women donate their jewellery, children offer up their pocket money, and people increase their working hours to donate their extra income. Those who are not well-off nevertheless feel content when they manage to give some hard-earned money to the cause.

Many things have been left unsaid in this piece of writing as they are beyond the expression that words can give. Only a few incidents and individuals have been mentioned in the process of bringing Veerayatan into being. Though many selfless volunteers and collaborators have remained unnamed and unsung, they will not be forgotten. They are forever honoured in our hearts and imprinted on the 'forehead' of Time.

The strength of wholeness is great and vast. From the completeness of a seed, a flower blossoms. The wholeness of every single grain of wheat produces 'gold' from the earth, in the form of the harvest. Unbroken grains of wheat are sown into the fertile earth and then fill the fields with green. Used by the whole of the human community, they feed the world. If this grain of wheat were to be divided up into its two halves, would it still retain the ability to grow? No, in that situation, the soil and water would cause it to decay. The primary cause of its burgeoning is its wholeness. The same holds true for life. In order to spread fulfilment and joy in the world, the integration of knowledge and action in our lives is necessary. When the seeds of knowledge and action are sown as one in the fields of life, then life will flourish and rise from the harvest of many good virtues. In this way, the power of wholeness fills life with pure bliss.

During the course of life, incidents suddenly occur that make the necessity for support imperative. True, if your legs have become weak, by all means use a crutch to support yourself. After all, you are in need of assistance. Whilst a crutch cannot help you to walk fast, it will certainly ensure that you are at least moving forward. But always remember that a crutch remains a crutch. It is not a leg and can never become one. On a long journey strong legs are needed. Crutches and other support structures can only help you for a short distance and for a little while.

When a farmer wants to start planting, he first clears the ground of weeds and stones and then he sows the seeds. One day his labour is rewarded. The farmer is delighted when the first produce of the harvest is brought into his home. The same is true in our lives.

If we want to sow the seeds of bliss and godliness in our inner being, then we must first clear from our minds the tangled thicket overgrown with the weeds of passion, negativity and ill-feeling. The more independent you are of traditional beliefs or sectarian prejudices, the more the doors of truth will open for you. Only a mind that is free and unconstrained can achieve the experience of complete liberation.



Protection of the Environment : A Protection for Life

Politics should be Governed by Religion

Change is Life : Life is Change

Two Banks: One Stream

Put your Energy into Good Deeds

Light up the Dark in the Places of Pilgrimage

The 'Mother Race' deserves Honour

Charioteer Needed

Love For The Birds And Beasts

Protection of the Environment : A Protection for Life

Puṣpaiḥ Suragaṇān Vṛkṣāḥ Phalaiścāpi Tathā Pitṛn
Chāyayā Cātithīntāta Pūjayanti Mahīrūhāḥ

'Look at the tree! It worships the gods with its flowers, it honours the ancestors with its fruits, and it provides shade for its guests.'
(A couplet from the Mahabharat.)

Trees swaying in the wind, every twig laden with smiling buds, flowers giving off their perfume, breezes running through velvet grass; these exquisite sights of nature bring joy to men's hearts. The gods also delight in such places. The splashes of green spattered across this canvas of creation give us untold bliss. But nature has feelings as well. Take the fragile little mimosa flower for instance. At the merest brush of our finger it shrinks away and curls up within itself, making us realise just how sensitive nature is. It seems to be asking humankind to look at it with love and understanding.

Trees and plants have been friends to man through the ages. From ancient times man has worshipped and looked after all sorts of plant life - fruit trees, flowers, medicinal herbs, grains and pulses - as they have been very useful to him. Two and a half thousand years ago Tirthankar Mahavir distinctly proclaimed : "Plants have life as well; they have a consciousness and a sensitivity. Like all other creatures, life and death also affect them. Nature experiences sorrow and joy, pleasure and pain, despair and delight, so do not torment or torture it. Do not cause it pain." Through his knowledge and experience he revealed his oneness with nature. He declared that earth, air, fire, and water are all sentient; they are man's benefactors, so we should not hurt them in any way.

What is amazing is that these pronouncements were made at a time when there was no such thing as environmental pollution. There was still a feeling of equilibrium in nature. There was no question of an ecological imbalance, as water and plant life was abundant. Even so, a declaration during that era for the protection of earth, air, water, fire and plant life was extremely important in itself.

Tirthankar Mahavir has gone so far as to say, "To be violent against these elements of nature is to commit an act of violence against oneself." Nevertheless man began the process of exploiting nature for his own comfort and convenience. He proceeded to appropriate and squander nature's treasures without any feeling of remorse. An increasing population as well as man's growing material needs and his aspirations to a comfortable life, have resulted in an ever escalating race to exploit the natural resources of the planet. The realisation that this process is not sustainable has finally dawned on people, but it seems to have accelerated the pace of exploitation, not slowed it down. Our present day attitude seems to be, 'It won't be here tomorrow, so let us use it today!' Man is facing the consequences of having looted the treasures of nature. The pollution of the air, the destruction of the forests and the misuse of water resources have become major problems on this fragile earth.

The scriptures cry out, the voices of the sages reverberate down the ages and the message of the great thinkers echoes in our ears, "O man! Do not destroy nature! Its beauty and tranquillity are created for your happiness. The sweet waters flowing in rivers and streams were put there to quench your thirst. The ocean that roars thunderously and washes the shore with its waves every hour of the day and night is also for your benefit. The lofty mountains stand as your sentinels. The cool and bracing breezes, so clean and healthful, are there to bring inspiration and blessings and a renewed vigour into your life. You have a unique connection with all the elements of nature. Your very existence depends on them. Do not destroy them!" However, man has been blinded by his own selfishness, he turns a deaf ear to all that is good for him.

In the *Vishnu Puran* it is written, 'Where fruit-producing and flower-bearing trees are destroyed, droughts, cloudbursts, flash floods and famine are inevitable.' Has man seen or heard this message? To satisfy his material desires, he has disregarded the teachings of the seers by continuing to destroy the remaining forests. Man has cut down the

trees that are our friends, set fire to the green forest and hunted down the wild life. The waste from our factories and workshops has not merely polluted, but poisoned such sacred rivers as the Ganges, the Jamuna and the Gomati. Exhaust fumes and the smoke from chimneys choke the air. Desertification is increasing, species after species is becoming extinct. Life-sustaining forests are vanishing. It seems that children of the future will see birds and beasts, trees and shrubs, only in picture books. The next generation will be bereft of the vast wealth of nature.

Some years ago UNESCO organised a conference in Indonesia in which 150 scientists and environmentalists from countries like Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, the U.K. and the U.S.A participated. The chairman of the conference, Mr.Vladimir, issued a timely warning regarding the fearsome consequences of the indiscriminate razing of forests and cutting down of trees. He said, " If trees die out, man will die out. Tornadoes in America, floods in Russia and monsoons in India have become unpredictable. Earthquakes and the shadow of famine are spreading everywhere along with new strains of disease. The reason for all this is the destruction of nature. Unless timely measures are taken the whole world will become a desert!"

Physicians tell us that oxygen is essential for life. Its depletion in the atmosphere does not merely cause infirmity but also results in the multiplication of new, highly resistant, strains of virus. In the absence of fresh winds, the stagnant air breeds mental instability. People are highly excitable or very depressed, and this results in increasing acts of violence. When violence and terrorism prevail, we generally find that it is due to the lack of oxygen in the atmosphere. This is one of the results of the unthinking destruction of the environment.

Plants are the greatest benefactors of human life. They provide us with plenty of tasty and nutritious foods and give us medicines to cure diseases. They produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. Men and animals

exhale carbon dioxide and inhale the oxygen produced by the trees. Trees are the lungs of the planet, absorbing our waste products and breathing out the pure fresh air we need to survive. This exchange is nature's gift to us all. Vegetation is essential to both man and animal.

Apart from carbon dioxide, our workshops and factories are continuously pumping sulphur dioxide, cadmium, lead, nitrogen oxide and so forth into the atmosphere. There are parts of Tokyo, New York and London where it is difficult to breathe. The air has become so poisonous that breathing it in is as harmful as the daily consumption of forty cigarettes. The toxins in the air cause problems such as lead poisoning that damages the kidneys, raises blood pressure and impairs mental function. The inhalation of sulphur dioxide causes asthma and other respiratory ailments. Like the god Shiva, the trees 'drink up' all of these poisons and as Shiva gives us blessings in return, so the trees release life-giving oxygen to us. How good and kind then is the tree! Its every leaf is a blessing!

Dr. T. M. Das, a prominent environmental scientist attached to Calcutta University's College of Agriculture, recently revealed the amazing fact that an average tree during the 50 years of its life, provides Rs.1.5 million worth of benefit to humanity in the form of oxygen production. On the other hand, the cutting down of one tree will bring in a maximum of Rs. 2,000 or Rs.3,000. For this small immediate gain, a gift to humanity worth Rs. 1.5 million is lost.

Trees, forests, shrubs and creepers are truly man's most selfless benefactors. They are nature's mightiest watchmen and the environment's most trustworthy guardians. Without them, all life is in danger.

Scientists have proved that in the coming years, trees will be our most important natural defence against modern hazards such as atomic radiation. So, in order to safeguard your future, protect and nurture all plant life.

At the sacred spot of Veerayatan, in the land of Tirthankar Mahavir, the sound of his

voice still rings out to awaken mankind, "O beloved of the gods! In the same way that nature's treasure-trove is open to you, it is there for the benefit of all sentient beings; all life forms should be able to share in the vegetation that covers the earth. Do not then use them only for your immediate gratification. Such overall destruction will be a catastrophe for all the different life forms. Rise up! Turn those hands raised in destruction into tools for creativity and compassion. Use your energy for the planting and nurturing of trees." Only in the protection of all plant-life, can we find our protection. Only as plant life grows and develops will we grow and develop.

Politics Should be Governed by Religion

The importance of politics has increased as it has extended its sway into every field of life. In ancient times the government exercised jurisdiction only over law and order. Other fields like education, health, literature, culture, art, science, architecture and social welfare were independent of government control. They were carried out under the guidance of religious leaders. Nowadays, however, politics has invaded all these fields. The government decides everything from what we eat and how we are educated, to our conditions of work and what we wear. In other words, every facet of our personal lives has come under the scope and direction of the government, rather than remaining in people's own hands. Power is centralised. Concepts like the raising of people's consciousness, moral and ethical conduct, character development, honour and purity have lost their meaning.

People nowadays talk of globalisation, but what does that mean? You are forced to buy, whether you like it or not, the products of those multinational companies that have struck deals with the politicians. It is difficult to find out how these products are made, or what they contain and to what extent they might affect your feelings or your religious observances.

Although it is said that we have a democracy, in reality there is a large gap between the people and those who govern them. Every aspect of people's lives, their aspirations, character development, education, food and individual tastes, even their religion and culture, has been taken over by the government. The people are puppets and the State the puppeteer. Motivated by their own selfish interest, those in power, whether in the different states or at the centre, appropriate every facet of national life into private fiefdoms. The ballot boxes decide the character of the country. This is a mockery of democracy. It is a clear transgression of the people's fundamental rights and a heartless repression of their wishes.

Every citizen of India wants a good government implementing worthwhile programmes for the development of the

country. Government should also do something about solving the problems that beset people every day. People want to live safely and in accordance with their beliefs and ideals. But when and how do they have the opportunity to lead an independent life? What is happening and why it is happening is no longer a secret. Anyone can read about scandals, corruption, deceit, violence, murder, covert sales of import-export licences and other such chicanery in the daily newspapers. Each new administration promises 'open' government, matters are taken to court, enquiries are made and commissions set up - all to no avail.

When we analyse the situation, we find the main cause of this decline is that politics has become devoid of religion and morality. It has lost its ideals and become an arena for greed. Historians, economists and sociologists may advance various theories, but spiritual thinkers and seers are unanimous in declaring that the departure of politics from the path shown by religion is the reason for chaos in government today.

A religion is not a cult or a sect. It is the art of living. The science of living is religion. Religion teaches us how to live life along proper lines and how to improve ourselves and help others to lead an ethical and spiritual life. It teaches us how to discipline ourselves and live our lives full of love and free from fear. Politics on the other hand is limited to external systems governing life and society. To ignore the primary principles that regulate human, moral and spiritual evolution is to construct a politics that turns its back on all that is most essentially human. Love, trust, benevolence, empathy and mutual help are all thrown overboard in contemporary politics. Politics today plays no active role at all in improving the character of men.

No system of politics can be worthwhile if it remains indifferent to the principles of religion. The word 'secular' was introduced to describe something as being unbiased towards any particular religion, but secularism today means indifference to truth, knowledge, trust, love and compassion. Such secular politics is no more

than a specious type of diplomacy, a base manipulation of caste and class voting blocks, and undeserving of the name 'politics'. It is far from concern with the fate of polity, which depends, as Aristotle showed, on the cultivation of civic virtues. In India today, instead of Yudhishthira's statesmanship, we have Dhritarashtra's diplomacy. Instead of Vidur's jurisprudence, we have Shakuni's electoral game of chance. By becoming indifferent to religion, politics has lost its way.

In ancient times religion held the reins of power; power was exercised in accordance with religious principles. Even if the ruler was hedonistic by nature, he had a religious leader to keep him on the straight and narrow. The religious gurus would apply their wisdom and pull in the reins to regulate the course of events. If the ruler became corrupt or did wrong, the senior members of the religious establishment would admonish him and set him back on the right path. As a result, the monarchy could not rule the country according to personal whim. History shows monarchs constantly seeking guidance from religious gurus, literally sitting at their feet till their doubts were resolved. The leaders of the Vajji and Licchavi republics went to Buddha and Mahavir to have their problems solved. Whenever conflicts, struggles and problems arose in those times, they were resolved, not out of self-interest, but on the basis of empathy and mutual agreement.

Emperor Ashoka, who had shed the blood of millions in his war against Kaling, became a ruler beloved of the gods, once he submitted to Buddha's religious teachings. His cruelty turned to compassion. Greed for an empire was converted to concern for people's welfare. The powerful and energetic Emperor Chandragupta always took advice from his guru Chanakya. Even a fierce warrior like Kumarpal devoted a quarter of the royal treasury annually to social welfare programmes at the behest of Acharya Hemchandra Suri. He ended the old feudal system and turned Gujarat into an ideal state. In his youth Akbar was a terribly cruel, fanatical and pleasure-seeking ruler, but when he came into contact with a great

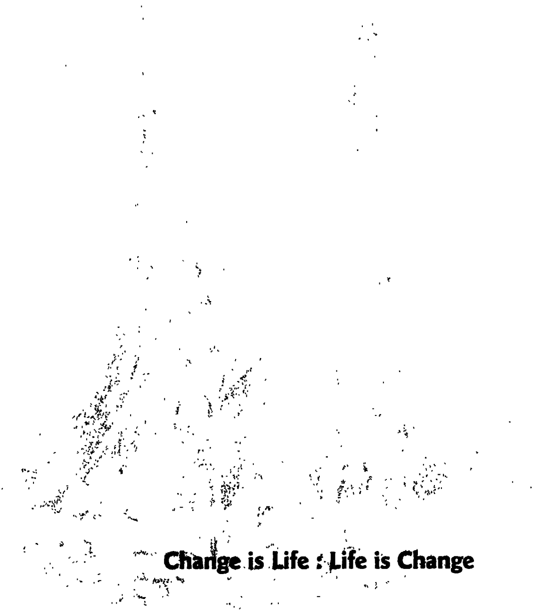
guru like Acharya Hiravijay Suriji, kindness and compassion towards his subjects took root in his heart. He launched a new religion called *Din-e-Illahi* that expressed love for all and an equal respect for all religions. History clearly shows that when politics has been guided by religion, it has worked for the welfare of people but when religious guidance ceased, wilfulness, cruelty, oppression and caprice ruled the universe.

Nowadays people say that religion should keep out of politics and politics should ignore the influence of any religion. 'We are secular' has become the popular political slogan. But can the two remain indifferent to each other? While it is clear that religion ought not to hanker after power or meddle in its exercise, equally politics should keep away from sectarian prejudice or any controversy involving theology. It should not get involved in sensitive issues like religious ceremony, different beliefs or the performance of rituals. However, religion and politics cannot remain indifferent to each other; because if this happens, religion loses its brightness, its spiritual electricity and its capacity to exert a beneficent influence on the community, and politics will not be able to advance the cause of justice, morality and social welfare within the polity. Today's polluted politics is a glaring example of the consequences of indifference to religion masked by the slogan of secularism.

Why has today's politics become so corrupt? It seems that those at the heart of power have completely lost their direction, they know neither history nor have they any genuine experience of dealing with people. They do not recognise education or culture, or have any dream for social betterment. They simply don't think about things like mutual trust and sympathy, national pride or the enrichment of people's lives. These precepts are at the core of every religion. Religious gurus have knowledge, feelings, ideals, character, inspiration and above all, they are unselfish. They have no hidden agenda.

People who have these qualities should stay

away from the seat of power and take an active role in promoting an ethical mode of life. Politics should look to such people for guidance, inspiration and support. Gandhiji greatly influenced politics and guided the nation, but he never sought a position of power for himself. The extent to which he was honoured, loved, and trusted by the people will remain unequalled even in years to come. He was called a politician and a saint, a great soul and the 'Father of the Nation'. He brought about a historic change in the country and broke the chains of slavery. Such role models are needed today to take the lead in formulating policies and propagating ethics and morality in the realm of politics.



Change is Life : Life is Change

Nothing remains static in the whole of creation. What appears so unchanging, or what we call 'still', is not really stillness at all. Everything is prone to change. In fact change is nature and nature is change. All living and non-living things are changing all the time. Neither man nor nature remains static. Though the dust under our feet appears inert and lifeless, were we to study it closely under a microscope, we would find a great deal of activity in each tiny speck. Even the Himalayas, which appear so immutable, are actually growing, changing and moving every second of the day. In the last 15 million years the Himalayas have grown by 3,000 meters. Geologist John Holden claims that 200 million years ago Japan was near the North Pole and India near the South Pole. Earth itself, the mountains and the oceans, the sun and the moon, are all changing. Change and evolution come through movement and flow. Scientists tell us that the moon moves around the earth, and earth moves around the sun. The sun is moving too. Our sun and its solar family moves around in a galaxy, which itself also moves spirally ad infinitum.

A dry plain at Haridwar marks the spot where seven sacred streams of the Ganges once flowed. The sand dunes of Rajasthan were once submerged under a mighty ocean. Orissa's Konark Sun temple, once built on the seashore, has now moved inland. Such changes are the law of nature, a law that brooks no exception.

Man himself is an intrinsic part of this change and he, in turn, is evolving. Philosophers have called man a 'death-inhabited being.' Every moment we are moving towards death. The human body is perishable and its existence is momentary. On the surface it seems so unchanging. Look inside and what do you find? Every moment the body changes as hundreds of thousands of old cells die and are replaced. At every moment our bodies are engaged in the process of life and death. They are nothing but a mighty crematorium and a massive birthing place where millions of cells die and are born every day.

Does the blood that flows through our veins stop even for a second? Unclean blood

returns to be refreshed, ready to be used again. The heart pumps continuously. Imagine what would happen if it stopped even for a moment. Physicians say that all the organs of the body have to be active all the time. The old wears out and the new is born. In this ceaseless round of creation and destruction, however, something remains immutable; that 'something' can change its form, but does not change within itself. We can see the forms of the substance, and these forms mean change. To reject this concept of constant change is to reject nature itself.

Change and flux are unavoidable aspects of creation. Body and mind, the inner and the outer worlds, nothing is untouched by this principle. The new-born baby changes daily before our eyes. Soon his youth will turn to old age and death will finally claim him.

In the same way that the condition of the body changes, so too does that of the mind. The mind is as playful as a breeze, as active as a monkey, as swift as a horse. The reason for all these analogies is that our inner world undergoes a continuous change as well. Our feelings change, cultures change, beliefs and observances change. We ourselves are changing. Society is changing. The world is changing. So why is there such a yearning for eternity? Why is there this excessive zeal and futile struggle towards permanency? It is true that man has been searching for immortality since time immemorial, and this has led to the discovery of much that is useful. The very existence of death has created the search for the means of its conquest. Immortality is a sweet dream that attracts man with her seductive beauty and that's why he keeps on searching for her. However, the great sages who, conquering all of life's passions, achieved immortality of the soul, have themselves testified that they could not have done so without first entering the realm of change.

Change pervades everything. Even in the attainment of spiritual perfection, infinitesimal changes take place. It is an inner process in which both progression and retrogression occur. One goes up and down the 'spiritual ladder'. Moment by moment, the stream of consciousness changes in its

course. Why then is man clinging so obstinately to his old beliefs and observances? In reality our beliefs and observances are changing and are changing imperceptibly. Unaware as we are of the motion of the earth rotating on its axis, so we are unaware of the changes occurring in our own beliefs. But we hold on to certain beliefs in the same way that a female monkey continues to cradle her dead baby long after every last vestige of life has been extinguished from its body.

Man too sometimes clings to the 'corpse' of his beliefs. By doing so, he goes against creation's principle of change and development. He interferes with the very function of the universe. Traditions laid down hundreds of years ago were right at that time, but much water has flown under the bridge since then. Circumstances have changed now; can it be right to cling to these old systems and make a fuss about it?

The cells of the skin die and are replaced. The tree's bark renews itself from time to time. The old peels off to reveal the new. Snakes shed their skin; trees and shrubs shed their leaves and sprout tender new ones. How then can man be the exception and hold out against change and renewal? To deny change, to oppose evolution, is futile. The reactionary endangers his own being. If a river ceased to flow, if trees stopped changing their leaves, if the body refused to cleanse the old blood in its veins, could they still exist? True wisdom comes from man co-ordinating the old and the new. It lies in sacrificing the urge to preserve the status quo, and in embracing the path of change and evolution. The truth is not in inertia; it is in motion. Real discernment is in waking up to the reality of things as they are. The meaning of life is movement, integration. We find death where there is inactivity, inertia and resistance to change. A poet has said:

He who is alive can bend
He who will not bend is like a corpse.

A living body is never stiff and unmoving. It is supple. A living mind is never prejudiced; it is not closed up in itself or absorbed in outmoded struggles. It is ever open to new ideas and thoughts.

The truly learned and wise are not bound by any particular way of thinking. They continue tranquilly on life's journey, by bridging the gap between the old and the new. Millions of years of human history have shown us that by nature man is evolving and progressing. For example, in the *Yugaliya-yuga* (the era of enjoyment), customs and rites were different because circumstances were different, but when men learned how to work in *karma-bhumi-yuga* (the action-era), the customs changed. The first emperor of this new action era, Rishabhdev, was instrumental in changing hundreds of old rituals. In that era brothers and sisters of the same family could marry, but he changed it and introduced a new system of marriage. As time goes by, countless new rites and observances come into being and the old ones fall into disuse. Change is necessary. It is a perfectly natural evolution and we should accept it.

In every age man adjusts and lives according to what nature dictates. Old customs are changed and new ones created. Old ways become obsolete, and new choices come to the fore. There is nothing wrong in this, it is not unnatural. Ideas, principles, and observances that have become outdated have to be replaced with new ideas, principles, and observances that meet present-day requirements. Tirthankar Parshvanath's disciples wore orange robes. They observed only four vows of renunciation, whereas Tirthankar Mahavir, mindful of the spirit of the age, changed this by stipulating white as the proper colour for the 'renouncer' and introduced the fifth vow – one of celibacy. Why did he make these changes? They were necessary at that time. Attachment to old customs is like some people's attachment to their tattered old clothes. Every new order grows up out of the old one. It is possible that even Tirthankar Mahavir's reforms were opposed at the time because it is a well-known fact that man finds it hard to accept new ways.

We like to cling to the old and familiar. This is because we fear change. The mind remains suspicious of anything new. We don't have confidence in new ideas and systems at first; we are not sure whether they

will prove successful or even convenient, but gradually they prove their usefulness. Only then do we give up clinging to the old beliefs. Similarly, just as new skin is formed underneath the flaking scales of the old, once a new idea or observance establishes itself, the old can be peeled away without any difficulty.

History shows that whenever great Acharyas of the past have felt the need to change the observances of the times, they have done so without any hesitation. In this manner, new principles, beliefs, and types of behaviour have been promulgated in accordance with the needs of the age. Those attached to the old ways may have aired their suspicions or accused the Acharyas of laxity in their conduct, but the new ideas, proving their worth, silenced their opposition.

Like the movement of time, change too is inevitable. Nobody can stop it. It is unavoidable. To resist it is to resist the most fundamental principle of creation. If you study the principle of the development of human evolution, you will find not a trace remains of those who would not change with the times, whereas those who go with the flow survive and prosper.

About two hundred years after Tirthankar Mahavir's nirvana, circumstances in society changed and with that people's customs and practices also changed. One of the things that was affected was the timing of *bhiksha* (the giving of food to ascetics). The ascetics asked their Acharya, "What should we do? If we ask for alms in the old way, we are unable to get food at the right time. If we don't follow the rules, we will be accused of defying tradition!" Shrutadhar Acharya Shayyambhav, an ascetic of great wisdom, replied, '*khittaṃ kālaṃ ca vinnāya. tahappāṇaṃ niuṃjaē*' - 'O ascetics, along with the injunction to follow certain rituals and customs, the Tirthankars have also told you to try to understand the needs of the times.' The correct behaviour for the ascetic is to perform his religious observances and other actions in accordance with the requirements of the times. He needs to look carefully at the situation and decide how he should act. This is the proper code of conduct for a

shraman. If you get stuck in your old ways and can't perceive the truth of the situation, then people will not admire you; you will bring dishonour to your *sangh* or bring your entire community into disrepute.

The great dialectician, Acharya Samantbhadra writes, 'The Tirthankars propound the teachings of religion according to the needs of the time.' [56] It is written in the *Acharang Sutra*, 'The striver who is perceptive and wise knows how to walk the different paths of life. He uses his discrimination in trying to understand the situation as a whole and behaves accordingly.' [57]

Do you find any opposition to change in all of these teachings? Does it seem that there is an excessive attachment to the status quo? No. There is wisdom and intelligence here. Where wisdom and intelligence exist, so too do awareness and awakening, and then only can one find the truth.

We often equate ancient customs with propriety. But mere antiquity cannot suffice to sanctify a particular practice or observance. It is the appropriateness of the practice alone that matters. Simply because a tradition has been followed for a long time does not necessarily mean that it is always appropriate. The ability to properly discriminate is necessary at all times. Whether a particular observance is ancient or modern is utterly unimportant. What counts is whether it is appropriate or not. As Acharya Siddhasen, one of the great scholars of the Jain logic, said: 'Acharyas through the ages have laid down certain customs and beliefs, but do they stand the test of time? Are they appropriate or fit to be used in present day circumstances? If a particular observance passes the test, then we can accept and respect it. We must not, however, subscribe to something simply because it is old and established. It is said that we should maintain the honour and prestige of our dead heroes, but I was not born simply to be a 'yes-man' - to keep up the good name of those long gone. Even if anyone became offended by what I have said or opposed to my views in any way, I would still not be swayed from my path.' [58]

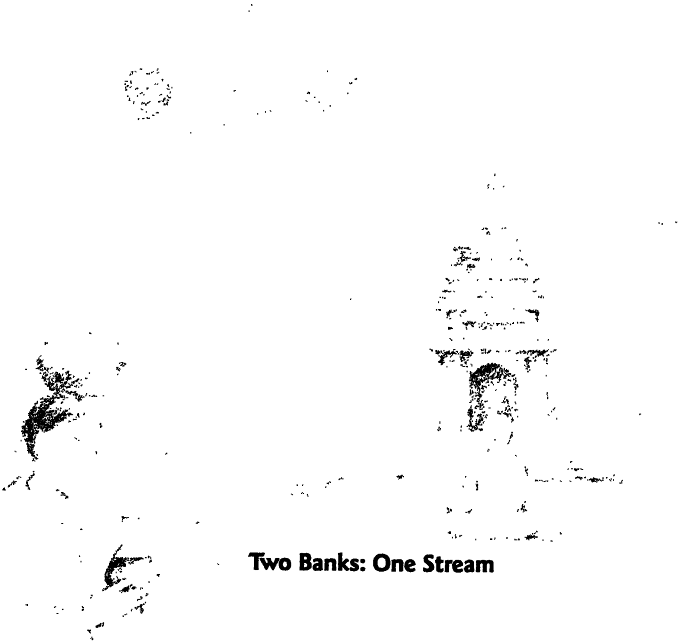
Desakalânurupam Dharmam Kathayanti Tirthankarāh
So Savvatō Savva Pannnācarı

Purātanaryā Niyatā Vyavasthitih, Tathaiva Sā Kim Parikṣitya Sōtsyati
Tathāh Vaktum Mrta Rudha Gauravā Daham Na Jātaḥ Prathayantu Vidvisah

The Jain religion has a multidimensional view of everything. It does not just look at things from one point of view. The expression of truth is relative to time, place, and circumstance. There are some truths which are eternal, and some observances and principles that are relevant only to a particular time. The eternal truths are: practice ahimsa, don't be possessive, and speak the truth. However, even in the practice of eternal truths, one should refer to the needs of the times. Sometimes circumstances are such that one would not just follow the eternal truths without thinking first. One has to tap into one's inner wisdom and rely on one's power of discrimination to decide what is appropriate at a particular moment in time.

Keep what is good and useful in the society's tradition, in religion and its orders. No-one objects to that. Their eternal truth endows them with beauty and their beauty makes them live. They never lose their beauty or usefulness. It is up to us to discriminate between what is outmoded and what is useful. In this way we must evaluate religion and tradition on the basis of rationality and intelligence.

Today we need vision; we shouldn't become obsessed with tradition or fearful of change. We should accept change as the basis of all creation. Change has taken place, change is taking place, and change will take place; change is essential. To welcome change with discernment shows intelligence. To pawn your intelligence by following ancient traditions without question is as bad as indiscriminately welcoming all change, be it good or bad. Sometimes we become so infatuated with these changes that we don't know how to choose between right and wrong. We should accept that change is an inevitable process of nature. Only then can we do it justice.



Two Banks: One Stream

Man has always been curious to know more about this infinite universe. His curiosity is the natural 'religion' of an active mind. It is the beginning of all progress, and the basis for development. It is curiosity alone that has made man more knowledgeable. It has given us the ability to soar like the birds in endless skies. It has shown us how to swim the gloomy depths of the ocean like fish. When countless stars shine in the night sky and meteorites shower the ground, the human mind instinctively asks, ' What are these things? How were they created? Why do they change? What principle governs the suspension of the earth in space? What makes it rotate? Why do the sun and the moon shine and the stars twinkle? Why does death exist? What causes these changes? How do they happen?'

At any moment, thousands of questions pop up in the human mind. It searches constantly for answers to them. These things cannot just be put to one side as incomprehensible. By saying that they are unanswerable, like the Buddha did, does not make the problem go away. The mind will know no peace until these questions are answered.

Both religion and science have attempted to find answers to these mysteries. Science restricts itself to what is observable. It tries to penetrate nature's secrets. It gives us information about the subtle secrets of atoms and molecules. Yet however fine its scrutiny, there is a limit to its scope. As science proceeds by induction and the experimental method, it can never arrive at a final truth. Its judgements are based on probabilities and hypotheses. Religion deals with inner feelings, with the experiment of the soul. It tries to solve questions with a knowledge that lies outside the ken of the senses. The findings of the laboratory cannot match this. Science can observe planets billions of miles away, but it is not able to see into the soul. Religion concerns itself with what lies beyond the realm of the quantifiable or the objectively observable; it is concerned with inner states of being, whereas science is concerned with outward possibilities. Religion's truths are intuitive, founded upon a rigorous process of

introspection, whereas science proceeds by conjecture and refutation based on observation. Religion bases itself on subjective experiences, science on objective utility. Science can give us progress; it cannot give us peace.

Science teaches analysis but cannot arrive at synthesis. Religion embodies synthesis, which is the process of bringing things together. It deals with subjective factors and all sorts of human experience. Discoveries made here cannot be broken down into their constituent parts. However, synthesis and analysis go hand in hand, that is why it is important that science and religion re-establish a dialogue.

Today's student refuses to hear any opposition to or criticism of scientific methods. Similarly the devout disciple cannot bear any criticism of his faith or religion. However, it is more important than ever that we understand both science and religion. Without science there is no objectivity in life, without religion there is no sweetness and understanding of human relationships. Science and religion both have their place.

History shows that science condemns religion as regressive and reactionary, while religion has returned the compliment by ridiculing science for being concerned only with base and trivial things. The result is that both have been distancing themselves from each other, and a kind of animosity prevails between the two. When great scientists like Newton in England, Galileo in Italy and Kepler in Poland established their revolutionary theories, they brought about an upheaval in the religious world. Their findings were completely rejected and they became 'personae non gratae'. Similarly reformers like Luther and Jung also met with scorn. This situation is now changing. Nowadays minds have been freed from slavish obedience to fixed beliefs and traditional observances. People have a much greater ability to discern what reality is. An urge to know the truth is science. It is also a genuine religion.

Whenever religion has gone against reality, it

has degenerated into idolatry, obscurantism, blind faith and hypocrisy. People started saying that whoever is the most religious is sure to be the biggest hypocrite. By not using our intelligence and our judgement we turn our faces away from reality, allowing hypocrisy to flourish under the umbrella of religion. Religion is not only about incantations, rituals, gods and heavenly forces. We get into difficulty when we forget our own powers and place all our faith in such notions. That's when problems arise and hypocrisy flourishes. The true form of religion lies in worship, discrimination, empathy, faith, inner tranquillity, truth, simplicity and mutual help. Man's hidden qualities and potential powers come to light when his inner virtues are developed. This is the domain of religion. No external power or ritual is required to bring it about.

Science itself has begun to accept that these forces exist. The beauty of science is that it tries to discover the truth but does not become pedantic about its answers. Science has changed thousands of its past beliefs because fresh observations bring new understanding. Until a few hundred years ago, scientists believed the earth was only a few thousand years old. Now they know it to be billions of years old. In this way science proceeds by research and experimental testing. It never proclaims anything as the final truth. When we become dogmatic or say that any research or discovery is indisputable, then we are being unscientific. The fact is that science is moving away from the physical world towards a view more compatible with spiritual science. It seems that physics is moving into metaphysics. Physics Professor Fritof Capra of California University, whose popular writings have done much to show the curious affinity between the world-view of quantum mechanics and that of the ancient philosophies of the East, has invited physicists to enter the arena of spiritual science. He says, "In penetrating nature's secrets we have so far only used logic and deduction. Changing circumstances make it necessary to try a new paradigm, the path of intuition. So far scientists have ignored intuition. The time has come for it to be restored to a place of honour."

It is this 'inner knowing' that Tirthankar Mahavir called *pariṇṇā*. It is discriminative intelligence, it is wisdom, it is religion. In discernment alone is religion found. Where it exists there is no prejudice. Along with the right way of seeing, there is love. Alongside creativity, there is compassion. Objectivity alone could make us greedy, contentious, lazy and self-centred. Religion teaches sacrifice, service, harmony and empathy. It puts objectivity in its correct context. In fact science and religion are complementary.

The great scientist Einstein was once asked, "Aren't you afraid of death?" He replied, "Nowadays, I am experiencing something surprising. I find myself becoming one with the universal consciousness. This 'oneness' is so deep that I forget my own separate existence altogether. It seems an entirely unimportant question to me, as to when one comes into or goes out of this world. To my way of thinking, these are just gross and subtle expressions of consciousness." In this way, we see that science is recognising the existence of an inner wisdom and gradually appreciating the constituents of *chetna-satta*- the realm reached by the minds of the sages, which is indeed the foundation of religion and spirituality.

The coming era may not see the opposition between religion and science that prevails today but instead may well witness their coming together. Science will do research; religion will guide science in its aims and applications. Then science will be more creative and work for the welfare of humankind. It will enhance life by bringing to the fore people's inner abilities.

Man has become unsympathetic and insensitive. His mind has become like a desert - lacking compassion, love and feelings for the greater things in life. That is why he needs religion and a spiritual dimension to his life. Religion waters the arid land and it brings cohesion. It helps people to live together in love and harmony. That is why I feel that religion should not just be associated with ancient observances. We must not imprison religion in traditions thousands of years old. We should make

religion a way of life.

Religion is not a stagnant pond; it is a river that has been flowing forever. Water that flows, runs clean and fresh. Religion should have a flow to it that maintains its purity. Religion teaches us the art of living. To accept each other's very existence and individuality, and help and promote growth of each other, is religion, and this is the religion we need today. This is a religion that is truly scientific. I believe that when hypocrisy flourishes in the name of religion, and when religion becomes like a business, there is a selfish and egotistical mind working behind it. Religion shows itself in its divine form where men co-operate with each other, are able to sympathise with one another in their sorrow, appreciate and celebrate the success and joy of others. The teachings of religion need to be more scientific, and science needs to build its foundations on religion's eternal truth. We become connected with this form of religion when we receive proper spiritual guidance.

In order to uncover the past, we dig up the ground and sift through the mud. We penetrate the different layers and analyse the traces of chemical substances found there. We find out about the changes that have happened to the soil. When we come upon the ruins of buildings and the artefacts they contain and find inscriptions on stone, we scrutinise them to find out how long ago they were made and what class of people used them. By asking questions such as these we attempt to reconstruct the story of man's cultural evolution. Like archaeology, our art and literature also tell us the story of the ups and downs of man's thinking and creativity. Against the backdrop of the ages the drama of man's spiritual quest is played out. In the mirror of literature we study the images of the past. We read about the thoughts and experiences of those thinkers and seers who helped man's development by the example of their asceticism. We find out how they uncovered their potential for greatness. Their great thoughts and sayings are harmoniously intertwined in the history of our culture. The fruits of their labour are found in our literature. That is why we

should study it. If we want to read the story of man's intellectual development and the emotional changes he undergoes, we can study it in books. The knowledge gained by these seers came through many hardships over a long period of time, but it is easily accessible to us in the form of literature. A little effort on our part enables us to understand the wisdom of the ages. All we need to do is to read our scriptures regularly and so establish a system of *svadhyaya* (introspective self-study) again.

I think religious education is very necessary today. Proper guidance in this field brings a breath of culture and refinement into people's lives. We talk a lot about faith, worship, meditation and religious observances, yet we forget what instilled that faith, inspired that worship, motivated that meditation and hallowed those observances in the first place. Philosophy, the study of the essence of things, did all this for us and now we shamefully neglect it. If we attempt to get to the truth without proper *svadhyaya* or introspective self-knowledge, it will be like trying to cure people without knowing the first thing about medicine. If an ignorant person tries to cure himself he will just get worse. With *svadhyaya* and self-improvement, we can learn how to heal ourselves. *Svadhyaya* is the only way to becoming your own guru. By absorbing the wisdom of the sages, our thinking becomes refined. That is why I would like to suggest that we follow the practice of *svadhyaya* regularly to enhance our knowledge and enrich our lives.

One does not gain knowledge by becoming a guru. To be a guru, one has to become a disciple first. Being a disciple means being curious and having a thirst for knowledge. It means that a sense of worthiness is beginning to grow within the person. Once one gains inner worthiness, then one is able to be a guru. Religious education increases our eligibility and fitness to do this. It enhances our capacity for gaining knowledge. What I want to say is, if you wish to follow both science and religion, you must practice *svadhyaya*. Self-study gives us vision, intelligence and a sense of responsibility. It inculcates true values in us.

It awakens a limitless potential for the soul's growth. Through self-study, our minds are purified. They become healthier. Our faith becomes clear and strong. Pujya Gurudev Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj says, "*Svadhyaya* is an elixir which turns ignorance into wisdom and gives wise men the capability of illuminating themselves and others as well."



Put your energy into good deeds

On this earth man is the centre of knowledge and action. When he moves forward on the path of knowledge, he can attain unparalleled heights. The soul that takes this journey enlightens itself and shows the way to thousands of other souls. What use is enlightenment that does not enlighten others? What use is a lamp or even a sun that does not illuminate others? The sun is full of light and the splendour of its rays lights up everything it touches.

We can only feel the light of the sun when we are in its presence, whereas the light of knowledge once kindled can continue to enlighten other souls for thousands of years. Action alone, however, remains limited. It can only inspire others at the time of its doing and in the presence of the doer, but if actions are supported by knowledge, they become powerful and influential. Though the realm of knowledge is autonomous, knowledge can't remain without karma. However, a person who attains final knowledge is not required to take any action as his final aim has already been achieved. This is when liberation is attained and the soul reveals its pure knowledge. But in the normal course of events, our actions should never remain unguided by knowledge. Actions without knowledge can be dangerous. It is like putting a gun or a stick in the hands of a blind man. He could use it to protect himself or it could be used to kill somebody. In fact both deeds and knowledge in the right balance are needed for life.

If you walk with your eyes open, you can walk steadily and reach your destination easily, but if you shut your eyes and then try to walk you might trip and fall. So whilst walking, it is important to keep your eyes open. Similarly, in our spiritual life and workaday world, we must have the same eye-limb co-ordination, we must have the right combination of knowledge and action in everything we do. Only then can we create the extraordinary in our lives.

The realm of our knowledge has still to be developed. We are not yet perfect and so the possibility of error arises. This incomplete knowledge can be dangerous. People who

follow the path of attaining the final truth sometimes lose their way, and they think that they should abandon all action. They believe that because every action taken involves karmic consequences, their liberation will be prevented. Therefore, to do nothing seems much more attractive and to take action seems counter-productive. They say that since every action brings about karmic consequences that increase the cycle of birth and death, they feel that we should not take any action at all. People believe that they should do nothing, and that they should stay aloof from taking action whilst still remaining in the world. But one has to remember that without attaining perfect knowledge, even the 'inactive' commit deeds with karmic consequences; even thought brings karmic consequences. No one can live in this world without taking action. Tirthankar Mahavir says that so long as there is life, one has to engage in taking action.

To take action is to be alive! Life itself means action. To think otherwise is a denial of life itself. The *Bhagavad Gita* says no living thing in this world can continue to exist without taking action. It's a great mistake to ignore something as essential as this. Under the pretence of religion and in the pursuit of final knowledge, the belief that one's actions bind one to karmic consequences has flourished. Some people decide to do nothing, hoping that this will prevent them being 'bound' in any way. And this inaction has become a religion in itself. It obscures the light of true religion. Though this sort of thing happens all the time in the name of religion, in actual fact it reduces the status of religion.

How are we going to carry out the simple tasks of life if we decide to do nothing. Where there is life, there are things to do, such as building a house, preparing food and looking after other bodily necessities. In doing these tasks some act of violence or hurt of some kind is bound to happen. Some people feel that since these actions involve violence, they destroy the purity of our souls and bind us with negative karma. This misinterpretation confuses people about religion.

How will we live if we stop taking action or cease to do things for ourselves? Generally the answer to this question is that we must not do anything ourselves or we will be committing a violent act. Someone else should prepare food for us, sew our clothes, build our houses, publish our books, arrange for our security, commit acts of violence for us. I would then ask: Do we escape from sin if another person does everything for us? Will the doer alone reap the guilt of sin while the beneficiary of the deed remains free from karmic consequences? No. We cannot place the rifle on someone else's shoulder, take aim ourselves, pull the trigger and then let them take the blame. This type of specious argument has given rise to many ridiculous observances or so-called traditions within the fold of religion.

This one-sided view shows a complete lack of understanding. It has brought us into disrepute. How can we expect others to do things we won't do ourselves. What is wrong is wrong, whether you do it or someone else does for you. It is against morality and the teachings of Tirthankar Mahavir to get someone else to do on your behalf any action that you don't want to do yourself. One does not escape the karmic consequences of the actions in that way. In fact, the karmic consequences will be compounded.

Those who are on the path of knowledge, are respected in society, and behave decently, should remain more active in their lives and do good deeds. When Tirthankar Mahavir was asked whether it is better to be active or to do nothing, he replied, "Those who are good and pure should be active. They should arm themselves with knowledge and experience in order to fight evil in society." If the good do not do something, the bad certainly will, and their actions will make society suffer. Power will pass into the hands of those who are not guided by compassion or discretion. Individuals, society and finally the nation will suffer if the power is handed over to these people.

It is not right for people to strive to do nothing. The good should do more. Pure

hands should be powerful hands. Decent people should enhance their capacity to do good. Those who seek the truth should further develop their capacity for doing things for others. They must serve society and spread the light of their knowledge. By battling against the evils that afflict society, they can purify it and raise it to a higher plane. Seers have shown us this through the ages:

Asaṅgihīya Parijaṇassa Saṅgiṇhaṇayāē

Abbhuṭṭhēyavvaṃ Bhavati

Gilāṇassa Agilāṇayāē Vēyāvacca Karaṇayāē

Abbhuṭṭhēyavvaṃ Bhavati

Always be ready to give relief or protection to those who are oppressed and afflicted. Always be ready to serve the sick and suffering. In this way knowledge enters the realm of action and creates a very special path to liberation called 'karma-yoga'. The truly knowledgeable will never stay inactive or be passive bystanders while society remains plagued by evils.

The biographies of the Tirthankars are vividly depicted in the Jain *Agamas*. The chronicles of their lives dramatically illustrate the fact that they were all 'karma-yogis' in the true sense of the word. They were detached from the results of their actions, but they were certainly not indifferent to the actions themselves. They were not motivated by the slightest personal consideration, yet they continuously performed great humanitarian deeds. Having attained *Keval-gyan* (the final knowledge), there was nothing more for them to achieve. Once they gained the thirteenth level of *gunasthanak* (the ladder of spiritual development), they achieved liberation from the chain of cause and effect - the cycle of birth and death. They had reached the heights of their spiritual purification, yet they continued to teach, to practice asceticism, to establish religious orders, to initiate aspirants, to instruct them and speak on doctrinal matters. They were ready to travel hundreds of miles to counsel people in need of instruction. These great sages and seers are an example of dynamic action and good works. They are role

models for society, the Jain congregation in particular, of how to do good for others in a natural way. If there is a decline in doing good, evil will prevail. If the good do not act, the bad will. If the religious isolate themselves, the irreligious will proliferate. Society will be plagued by violence, viciousness, corruption and injustice.

Nowadays thousands of people have taken to the cloister, preferring a contemplative existence. They are doing nothing and they are dependent on others. To live on the labour of others is to impose an unwarranted burden on society. In the name of religion and sacrifice, thousands of monks and nuns are choosing this way of life. People are repulsed by the very name of sacrifice. Suspicion replaces trust, disillusion replaces inspiration, and disapprobation replaces respect for religion.

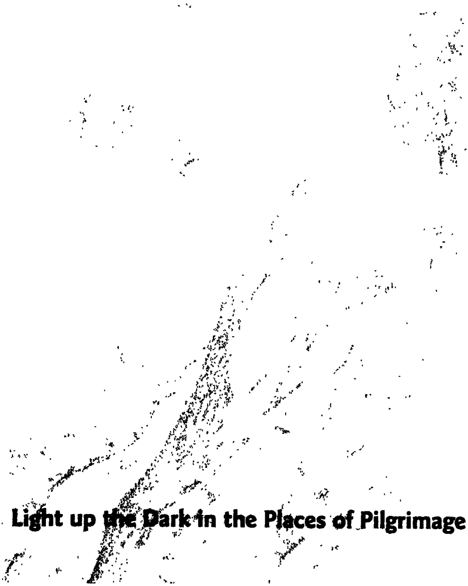
In this scientific age people will not accept religious teachings without question. They want to approach religion in a logical and respectful manner. They want to test things with their own reasoning faculties, rather than simply taking them on trust. They say: 'If you're a seer, a religious person, why don't you teach us by your own example? You know the right path but instead of going down it yourself, you keep urging us to take it. Why don't you perform *seva*, or do the good deeds that you keep telling us to do? Wouldn't the good deeds be that much more holy, effective and inspirational if undertaken by you? Your countless scriptures will remain useless until you yourself do something to show their effectiveness. The impact of one good deed performed by your own hands will be able to create the effect that many hours of preaching from the scriptures will not. Thousands of hands will then join you in your good works. Why don't you do something practical as well as preaching to us? Why do you stop there? Is it because you are a *shraman* and your code of conduct does not allow it? What is the meaning of the word *shraman*? Does it mean someone who works hard or does it mean someone who only preaches? If the practice of ahimsa is a good thing, if service to humanity is a good thing, giving knowledge to others is a good

thing, and promoting vegetarianism is a good thing, then what is stopping you from doing all these good things?'

Today people are logical and independent thinkers. They want answers to these questions. Jainism promotes detachment from the actions you take. It does not preach the abandoning of those actions themselves. Tirthankar Mahavir said, '*Āsaṃ Ca Chandaṃ Ca Vigiñca Dhīrē*' - Wise people give up their desires and attachments yet continue to do good.

Jainism is about taking action. It is about finding fulfilment through one's good deeds. Tirthankar Rishabhdev, in this *avsarpini kal* (regressive half cycle), was the first promoter of *purusharth* - taking action. He first taught people how to work and then he instructed them in religion. In other words, work is essential. Deeds are indissolubly linked with life and creation. If along with the doing of deeds the mind is awakened by religious teachings, then those deeds become pure because they are being performed without any desire for reward in return. That alone makes them effective and inspirational. They become good deeds. As such deeds are emulated, goodwill spreads like a chain reaction. Actions performed with detachment do not bind, rather they open the door for liberation. If abstaining from action were sufficient to extinguish karmic consequences, then why were we asked to practice actions like fasting, meditation, rituals, charity and other such cardinal virtues? Why did we need to establish religious orders at all? At one time you could just go into the jungle and gain liberation through solitary meditation there, but Jainism has not accepted the abnegation of action as religion, rather it has asked us to keep a taste for doing things, whilst remaining detached from the results of our actions. Inaction must be given up and selfless work towards the good should be wholeheartedly embraced.

Love is not something that can be poured into us from outside. It is simply there within. It only needs to be unveiled to bring it forth. A sculptor breaks into a stone; with a hammer and chisel he carves it. But what is made new through this process? Nothing! The sculpture was already hidden in the stone. It is a question of shaping the stone, and chiselling it using the proper methods and techniques. Digging a well does not create any water. Water is already present in the perpetual flow from the earth's womb. All that is required is to dig through the earth's layers to allow it to emerge. In the same way, purity of the soul, or godliness, is hidden in every man. It need only be unveiled. It is this godliness, or essence of the purified soul that is love - that which leads a man to become a supreme man. And this is the golden path that takes a man from the pursuit of worldly pleasures to the attainment of liberation.



Light up the Dark in the Places of Pilgrimage

Tirth-Kshetras (the places of pilgrimage) are a distinguishing feature of our culture. The word *Tirth* means the sacred bathing spots found at the confluence of various holy rivers. By extension, the name has come to mean mountain retreats or other areas hallowed by the austerities and spiritual exercises practised by the great seers, and purified by their presence.

From a cultural point of view the sites of Indian pilgrimages are also a holy 'confluence' of different sects, religions, languages and traditions. Here you can see India's diversity, her brilliant colours, her pageantry and her intoxicating beauty. In ancient times these holy places were the vital centres of learning and religious debate. If you visit any of these pilgrimage sites today, you can catch a glimpse of the soul of India. That is why India is called *Tirth-Bhumi*, 'the land of pilgrimage'.

Many of the ancient places of pilgrimage are situated in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Both Buddhism and Jainism have strong roots in Bihar. It is the heartland of both these religions. In Bihar alone there are hundreds of places of pilgrimage. At one time these sites saw many scholarly discussions by great thinkers and seers. Their meditative zeal and spiritual striving lit a flame which illuminated the entire nation . One could find a row of these ascetics, like jewels in a necklace, sitting strung out across the mountain tops in quiet introspection. What was uttered there reverberated around the world. Sadly that situation no longer exists. These once very lively places of pilgrimages - temples, holy peaks, banks of rivers and mediation groves - now wear a sorry air. They have become like shabby stopover places, like empty shells. Though their spiritual light has not been extinguished, it has considerably diminished. If we are not careful it will go out altogether and darkness will prevail. We have to re-establish our holy pilgrimage sites as centres of worship, welfare work, education and cultural activity. We must restore them to their former glory.

It seems that many of the areas where our holy places are situated, are economically backward and the people living there are

very deprived. They lack proper provision for health and education, and a proper infrastructure for development and commerce has not been set up. Sometimes it appears that this backwardness, this slow pace of development, has in itself become one of the hallmarks of our holy places. There is dependency instead of self-sufficiency; instead of being welcomed, travellers are robbed of their belongings. In fact, neither life nor property is safe in these regions. People who visit these places make generous donations, as they come for religious purposes and they feel an attachment for the place. They are eager to do something for local development but often they do not get the co-operation of the locals. The local people benefit from the generosity of the philanthropic pilgrims, but once the largesse has been dispensed to them, they promptly disperse. They do not even use the money for their own or their family's welfare.

Such acts of charity have actually become an obstacle rather than a spur to development because they breed a dependent culture and provide cash for social evils. Poverty, unemployment and various types of addiction are increasing. I feel terrible anguish when I see that the glorious past of these places has disappeared; when I see these mountains and forests, once hallowed by superhuman feats of spirituality, reduced to being places of iniquity. I feel great sorrow when I see places once described as centres of knowledge, now drowning in illiteracy. Places where great world religions were born are now notorious for their staggering infant mortality rates. Places that attracted the great souls of the world with the rich perfume of their culture and spirituality, are now overrun with poverty, unemployment and crime. Anywhere you go today the situation is the same, whether it be Rajgir, Pavapuri, Guniyaji, Shikharji, Vaishali or Champapuri. The bitter truth is that all these social evils tend to be concentrated in our holy sites - turning them into places of danger and degradation.

It is vital that we change the situation as soon as possible. We hope that our places of pilgrimage will once again become centres of knowledge, purity and spiritual awareness.

For this to happen, however, a truly concerted effort is required. A far-sighted collaborative scheme is essential. The development of pilgrimage sites cannot be confined to the building of temples and rest houses alone. Their reputation as centres of excellence will be restored only if the living conditions of the local people are improved and a sustainable development programme is instituted.

Thousands of people around the world visit these areas of pilgrimage every year. Pilgrims come here with faith and devotion in their hearts. They are eager to do something to help the local people. When they see what the conditions are like, they immediately try to alleviate the poverty and unemployment. They distribute medicine, food, clothing and other necessities. However, due to the poverty, unemployment and addiction that they face, the morale of the people of Bihar has sunk so low that despite these energetic efforts by the pilgrims, the situation changes very little. What is needed is a minutely planned development programme by the pilgrims to make the local conditions better and make the people less dependent.

I believe that a one-sided approach will not resolve the problem. Pilgrims can donate money and support but this will not suffice. It has to turn into something very practical. No progress is possible until the consciousness of the local people is raised. Self-worth cannot be given, it has to be born within the self. When people are responsible for their lives, help will automatically come to them. As people become less dependent on others for food, clothing and the basic necessities of life, the situation will begin to change and a different atmosphere will be created in these holy places. Hard work and collaboration will replace despair and lack of morale. However, the problems will never be solved if the people in these holy places remain objects of charity.

One of Bihar's main problems is lack of security. People are happy enough to come on a visit or make a donation, but no one wants to stay because their physical safety cannot be guaranteed. From time to time people inquire as to what can be done to

improve conditions. They are full of enthusiasm and want to contribute to the development of our pilgrimage sites, as well as helping local people. Industrialists are willing to put up factories; schools, colleges and hospitals could be opened - but nothing will get off the ground if the law and order situation does not improve. The fact is that just hearing the word 'Bihar' frightens people. An awful atmosphere of insecurity prevails there. Everyone is worried about the problem. To improve the situation, the first thing local people have to do is to instill confidence in their visitors by creating an atmosphere of safety in these areas. Let the benefactors be seen not just as a source of revenue but as respected guests, and let local people be entirely responsible for their safety.

The locals should make the visitors feel at home and should make them feel secure. They should let the visitors know that they are with them, not against them, and show willingness to help in the development work. In my view it is only then that these problems of development at the pilgrimage sites can be properly addressed. We must replace the present 'reign of terror' in these parts with security, and illiteracy and disease with an atmosphere of trust and collaborative effort, so that the task of development can be carried through successfully.

Much can be done to promote vegetarianism in Bihar. Local people are trapped by ignorance and addiction, so it will be necessary to go from door to door to tell them about a better way of living. First, their diet and manner of life will have to change - they'll have to be free from addiction. The ordinary person in the area is very poor, fearful and superstitious. As they are uneducated, they are unable even to think of progress. Our first priority is to end this ignorance and addiction. Poverty is no crime; it is merely the consequence of ignorance and lack of a proper education. No development is possible for these people unless their mental outlook changes. Pilgrimage site protection committees and other organisations should get together and agree to a programme of action. At the same

time the consciousness of the local inhabitants must be raised and they should feel motivated to collaborate on the restoration of the pilgrimage sites. I believe that this environment can then be rendered free from fear and development can go ahead.

When I turn the pages of history, many things become clear to me. Jain society has always played a leading role in the independence struggle, constructive development programmes, and welfare schemes. Jains have been at the centre of building up the nation as a whole.

The Jains have always acted on the principle of *parasparōpagrahō jīvānām* - there can be no progress or development in our lives without us helping each other. I see the Jain community in village after village assisting wholeheartedly in the building of schools, hospitals, temples and the development of other worthwhile institutions. I feel that their contribution to the development of our nation has been remarkable but that it has never been adequately recognised. With all due respect, I must point out that these services to the community have not been seen in their true light. People have been ignored rather than rewarded with compliments. No honour, prestige or other mark of distinction has been accorded their charitable deeds. The prevalent attitude seems to be that once the philanthropists have done their work, they should move on.

What sort of attitude is it that, when someone comes from far away to do something for you, and you don't even say two words to thank him; you don't seem in any way obliged to him and your eyes never light up with affection or empathy towards him? This indifference should be swept away and we should all learn to return the affection shown us by our benefactors. We should welcome their assistance. At the same time, the Government of Bihar should accept responsibility for developing these pilgrimage sites that are visited so regularly, and to provide security for them. Once the development of these places of pilgrimage is underway, the whole state will prosper.



The 'Mother Race' deserves Honour

One of nature's greatest creations is woman. She is like a song that has beauty, harmony, sweetness and the ability to bring bliss to the world. All the gentler virtues of creation - generosity, nobility, love and compassion - come to life in woman. But this mirror image of nature's harmony has now been tarnished. It seems as if the melody of this great song is out of 'synch'.

It is the arrogance of human beings that has done this. They have a special capacity for splitting things up, they delight in making divisions and ultimately they have succeeded in breaking up humanity into two separate species, man and woman. Every good thing has been reserved for the man, whilst woman has become oppressed and afflicted. The human race, which is only a small part of creation, lives by a system that is based not on genuine virtues, but on imaginary differences. There are no disputes when distinctions are made according to real virtue, but conflict is inevitable when artificial lines are drawn up.

Mankind's twisted intellect has always distorted nature by fomenting dissension and disharmony. Life can only be happy and blissful if all the divisions are brushed aside and a sense of harmony and oneness is restored to the world. Man and woman have both been equally important in the development of human culture. In fact the contribution of the woman sometimes exceeds that of the man.

I would like to use the atom as a metaphor to illustrate the role of men and women in society. At the centre of the atom is the nucleus, and a mist of various other sub-atomic particles surrounds it. It is the nucleus that holds the atom together. The nucleus is the source of energy. The atom has an infinite capacity and the source of that power lies in the nucleus. Humanity is just like an atom. Woman is the nucleus and man the surrounding shell containing the haze of sub-atomic particles. The innate capacity for reproduction lies with the woman. Growth, increase, nurture, everything comes from her. Although the construct of a human being comprises both man and woman, woman plays the larger

role. She is the root of creative energy and is the nucleus of humanity's strength. Humanity orbits around the female.

Man and woman are the two wheels of the 'chariot' of creation. Woman is the earth, man the vegetation. Man may grow upwards but woman supports his roots and enables him to flourish. Woman's greatness is comparable to the earth's greatness. Like the earth, the mother symbolises courage, patience and creativity.

If these innate virtues of the 'race of mothers' had been properly utilised in the first place, our culture would have been more enriched and more closely integrated. Sadly the reverse has come to pass. Instead of leading independent and effective lives, women have been condemned to living a helpless existence. This is true even today. Thousands of women are still oppressed and leading a life of slavery and dependency. This awful situation demands a lot of thought. Despite the efforts of great prophets and social reformers over many years, the problem remains the same. Why is this so?

Religious people have played a large role in determining the character and operation of social institutions. However, they are not responsible for all the shortcomings prevailing in society. Society sickens and many social evils arise when it does not change with the times. People lack courage and lose the ability to bring about a relevant change in their social conditions.

In sacrifice, service, nurture, patience and forgiveness man sometimes falls short, but woman is always there, ready to help, a symbol of conscientiousness. Although stories of her sacrifice do not always appear on the pages of history, they are imprinted on men's hearts. There have been many heroines, like the Rani of Jhansi, who defeated men in battle and inspired them with her courage and bravery. In the realm of spiritual science, Gargi too was far from being alone in grasping and expressing the highest and subtlest forms of truth. The wisdom of women like her impressed sages like Yagnyavalkya, well-known for his prudence and brilliant intellect. Countless women have brought men-folk back to the

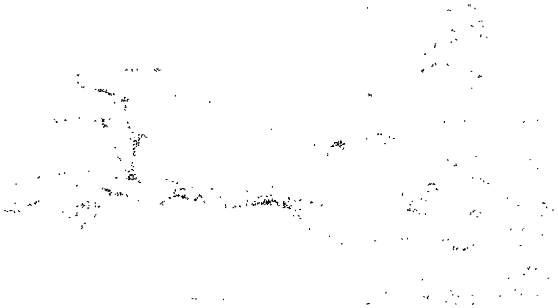
right path by their powers of rationality and discrimination.

In the history of the human race, there have been times when all the paths of progress were monopolised by men. Men alone exercised power or were permitted the pursuit of pleasure. Religion too was restricted to them. Women were permitted nothing, not even their own emotional life. No independence at all was given to them. Men controlled women's lives from birth to death. This was a woman's fate.

The race of mothers has the capacity needed to capture the heights of spirituality. Woman can reach the pinnacle of success even in their social lives. There is no area in the fields of science, politics or art where she is unable to excel. Will a time ever come when the entire human race lives together without distinctions of class, caste, colour and importantly gender? Should it come to pass, it would be the golden age of our development. Though men and women have different virtues and capacities they should be accorded equal respect and equal rights. Only then can we have a truly healthy society.

A mother is a maker and creator - she can never be a destroyer. If the discipline and prudence she embodies could be put to use, then the escalation of nuclear weapons would be stopped. The whole of creation requires compassion, not cruelty, and the epitome of compassion is the race of mothers.

A strong and healthy society can be created only if respect for the race of mothers is inculcated in us all. Then this century will witness a re-awakening of womankind and herald a new sense of well-being brought about by women.



Charioteer Needed

When a skilled sculptor becomes immersed in his own imagination, a timeless work of art is produced. When a learned thinker plumbs the depths of his own thoughts, beautiful literary works are created. When a talented specialist in any field applies himself to his research he can astound the world with his discoveries. Similarly the skilful *karyakartta*, the capable worker, who is utterly dedicated to serving society, can rejuvenate it.

I believe this sort of *karyakartta* is an asset to any organisation. He can help enlighten society and move it in the right direction. He can undertake the responsibility for building it up. In the language of Hindu mythology, the true *karyakartta* embodies the strengths of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*. Through his force of character and strength of soul, he can be instrumental in creating a healthy society. He can help the helpless and take care of the sick and needy. He is a fearless protector of the weak. His independent and revolutionary thinking can demolish anti-social and anti-national elements. He can root out reactionary ideas and beliefs. The *karyakartta* is society's *Tridev* (triple deity).

There is a lack of properly educated and motivated *karyakarttas* in every part of society today. When trying to make any work programme, organisation or movement successful, the role of the leader is relatively less significant than that of his *karyakarttas*. The leader is like the flag on top of the temple; the *karyakarttas* are its bricks and mortar. To my mind the humblest labourer is more worthy of respect than the most senior *karyakartta*, if the latter is motivated only by self-interest. The true *karyakartta* is never motivated by self-interest; he remains detached from trying to attain personal glory. He is an idealist and inspired to do good works for others. He lives a life of self-sacrifice. *Karyakarttas* should be pure in thought, worshipful, self-disciplined, self-controlled and eager for selfless service.

They should not follow any particular principle or belief slavishly, but use instead their own powers of judgement and discrimination. In addition, they should have

a stainless character. They should never embrace expediency for the sake of success. They should prefer failure along the ethical path, to success down the path of expediency. We need this type of fearless, determined, sensitive, selfless and sympathetic *karyakartta* today. We must produce the type of *karyakartta* who will aim for spiritual purification through service.

At eye camps in Veerayatan I see many people who do a lot of hard work without being asked. They give themselves over completely to their voluntary work. Some put ointment in the eyes of patients, some spread out the bedding whilst others arrange for food and drink. The family-like atmosphere brings comfort to the patients and in turn their gratitude brings joy to the volunteers. We should do this selfless service wholeheartedly and extend it to the other parts of Bihar, and from Bihar to the rest of India, and from India to the whole of humanity.

Along with this humanitarian service we should work collaboratively to our full capacity and with all our talents on projects for education, combating addiction, providing employment and other worthwhile goals. We should use our energy for the implementation of these projects. We should train proper *karyakarttas* who will guide people on their way and keep the 'chariot' of service going in the right direction and at a good speed.

Chariots are the symbol of movement in Indian culture. They represent ideals and symbolise our progressive thoughts. Service is our ideal. It is what our movement is about. It is our chariot. The *karyakarttas* are the charioteers. We need a charioteer who knows the art of controlling the horses, knows the road well and also knows where he is going. Even more important, the charioteer should be able to give guidance to the other person mounted on the chariot with him. The charioteer is greatly esteemed in Indian culture.

Looking at the distant past, my gaze fixes itself on the events of 5,000 years ago. The Mahabharat war is about to start. Lord Krishna has become Arjun's charioteer. The

Pandav and Kaurav armies are facing each other on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Arjun wants to quit the battlefield. He debates whether to fight or leave. He can't make up his mind about what to do. What is the correct action to take? At this juncture, Arjun's charioteer, Lord Krishna, shows him the way. Arjun's indecision comes to an end. He decides to fight. Here Lord Krishna is Arjun's charioteer and guide at one and the same time. He gives guidance, not only on Arjun's immediate dilemma, but also on all other matters of religion, politics and sociology. Arjun was victorious at Kurukshetra because of the guidance he received from his excellent charioteer.

In that same Mahabharat era, a charioteer provided him with such valuable guidance, that the course and destination of Yadukulbhushan Arishtanemi's life changed completely. Nemi Kumar was a bridegroom being driven to the marriage hall in a chariot. In the midst of listening happily to the strains of the exquisite wedding music, he could hear the piteous cries of birds and beasts. His heart was very moved at the sound. He asked his charioteer what the matter was, and why these terrible cries of distress were coming up through the music. Arishtanemi's charioteer explained to him that these animals and birds were being butchered for the wedding feast. From that very moment the course of Arishtanemi's life changed irrevocably. He took off his wedding finery, renounced the world, and devoted himself to the religion of universal compassion. In this case, a charioteer changed not only the direction that his passenger's life was taking, but also guided him on a path of religious awareness.

In the age of the Ramayan, King Dasharath was being bested in combat, when his wife Kaikayi came forward to take the place of his charioteer. The king had been losing the battle, but his new charioteer's dauntlessness put him on his mettle. She managed the horses and also wielded the bow to such good effect that her intervention snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. A king was about to be defeated - a charioteer brought him victory.

Prince Siddharth had a charioteer called Nand. On seeing an old man, a sick man and a dead man successively in his path, he asked his charioteer what had happened to them. He had never seen a sick, an old or a dead person before. His inquisitiveness was astutely answered by his charioteer Nand. Suddenly Siddharth was 'awakened'. He renounced the world and became the Buddha. One charioteer's guidance caused millions to find the right path.

We need such charioteers, *karyakarttas* and guides who can use their wisdom, far-sightedness and other good qualities to plan and implement programmes for people's welfare. From their experience, extraordinary capacities, wisdom and learning, they should establish centres for the service of humanity all over the world. They should guide the organisations as well as work wholeheartedly for them with all their strength, dedication and wealth.

I believe that programmes motivated by high ideals and feelings for people's welfare will be successful and effective because they embody a move forward. The river never tires; it wears down rocks and breaks through other barriers, and is then joined on the way by its other tributaries until it finally reaches the sea. We should be similarly tireless in pursuing the common good.

If the cause is worthy, you will never lack funds. If the goals are clear, you will never lack good *karyakarttas*. Along with the power of money, let's have 'people power' and inner strength too; only then will we be able to impact on the spirit of the age and get things moving.

Buddhism was awarded by the munificence of Emperor Ashoka who opened up his imperial coffers to fund Buddhist missionary activity both within India and abroad. Shankaracharya was generously assisted by Raja Mandhata, who offered up all his treasure as well as his entire army to him. The wealthy Bhamashah sacrificed his all to supply Rana Pratap with the funds necessary to keep the Moghals at bay, and thus preserve the sovereignty of Mewar.

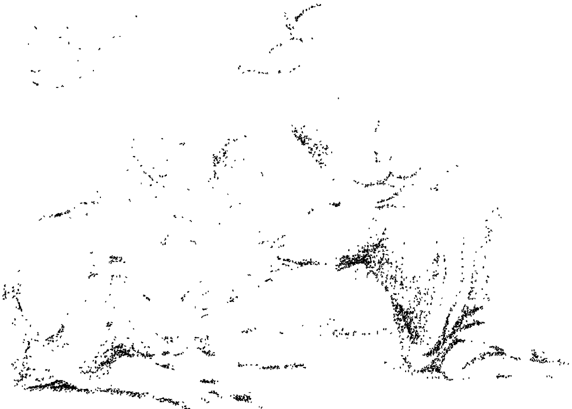
When Gandhiji needed resources for the independence of our country, he was supported by people like the Birla and Bajaj families. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was unstintingly supported by many of the Indian families resident in Burma. They organised a collection for 'Azad Hind Fauz' by presenting to him his own weight in gold. It is rightly said that when you move forward purposefully, you will always find a path.

Good ideas and worthwhile programmes possess an intrinsic power that attracts support. Christianity, assisted by only a handful of apostles, has now converted a third of humanity. Karl Marx was much persecuted and rejected in his own time, yet his ideas came to hold sway over one half of the human race. A good deed is like a drop of oil that imperceptibly spreads out across the surface of an entire tub of water. In the same way, great ideas slowly make an impact throughout creation.

Today we need *karyakarttas* with focus. We need trained charioteers, capable people who are willing to accept the role of a guide. Working together they will put the 'chariot' of progress on the road to the divine light once again. I wish that:

Only when great souls rise,
will there be a golden dawn,
The rays will spread everywhere,
And there will be a 'fragrance' of bliss
in every direction.

✻



Love for the Birds and Beasts

The beneficent teachings of Tirthankar Mahavir flowed along in accordance with the principle of the oneness of life. He said:

Savvē Pāṇā Piyāuyā Suhasāyā Duhapaḍikūlā

Appiyavahā Piyajīviṇō Tamhā Nāivāējja Kaṃ Ca Ṇaṃ

Every creature on earth wants to live. They all love life; nobody likes grief or pain. No-one wants to die. So do not kill *anything*. Do not even think of hurting or harming *anyone*.

Ahimsa doesn't just mean not killing, it means recognising the right to life of all sentient beings. It means the acceptance of their very existence. I think that Tirthankar Mahavir's ahimsa goes even further than that. It means loving all sentient beings. It means helping them and looking after their welfare. Ahimsa means behaving in a compassionate way and having empathy for all beings. This is the universal expression of Tirthankar Mahavir's ahimsa.

The trees growing on earth, the birds in the sky, the little fledglings flitting in and out of the groves, the fish in the sea, the frisky deer in the forests, running rabbits, leaping monkeys, the lordly lion, the stately elephant and even the tiniest of creatures like the ant, are all imbued with the same consciousness, with the same life force. What is within us is within them as well. They all have feelings. They all feel pain. Imagine our plight if a killer with a sword or a bloody knife in his hand confronted us. How would we feel in a situation like that? We would start to shake, our mind would be paralysed with fear. Our limbs would lose their volition. Would not the reaction of a cow, buffalo, lamb, deer, rabbit, duck or chicken when confronted with a butcher's knife be the same? Wouldn't the creature feel terrified as the blade approached its throat? Wouldn't it yearn for life? If you can watch without compunction an innocent animal being tortured or killed then you are not fit to be called a *shravak*, let alone a human being.

The first great 'doer' of our age, Tirthankar Rishabhdev, taught various arts and skills such as agriculture, the preparation of food, the kindling of fires, the skills of writing, the

rites of marriage and an organised system of society. He taught sixty four different types of these social skills to people, through his daughters Brahmi and Sundari, who were very good at figures and the rudiments of writing. Along with the studies of music, astrology, swimming and chemistry, he taught the art of understanding the language of the birds and beasts as well. The main objective of this study was to understand the feelings of these creatures and do something to alleviate their pain and suffering.

Birds and beasts also communicate in their own way. But will man, who is so self-absorbed, ever stop for a moment to try and understand what they are saying? Will he ever respect their ability to understand things or recognise their importance in our world?

One day an extraordinary thing happened. A philosopher was wandering alone in the silence of the forest, concentrating on solving some complicated question. He was exhilarated by his quest and unaware of his surroundings. Suddenly he saw a lion standing right in front of him. The lion roared at him as if in welcome: "Oh man! You are just in time. I prayed to God only a minute ago and you have been sent to me as a gift from Him. Thank you."

The philosopher was extremely frightened. He was staring death in the face. The blood froze in his veins and rendered him dumb with terror. Gathering his last reserves of strength, he tried to run away. "Beware," roared the lion, "don't your dare take another step. I will eat you today! Oh man, our sacred scriptures say that man is the best food to eat, since he is fed on the best that money can buy. That is why his flesh is so delicious. To eat men is a sacred duty for us lions. Securing a man to dine on is the result of our doing good deeds in a previous life. God has created man for the lion to eat. Prepare yourself."

The philosopher could think of nothing but his own safety. In fact, he completely forgot about philosophy. Frozen with terror, he managed to say in a trembling voice, "Lord lion! In our scriptures it is written that

everything has been created for the benefit of man, because man is unique. He is superior to all other creatures."

Man may think of himself as intelligent and boast of his logic yet faced with the lion's arguments he finds himself trapped. The lion said, "Foolish creature! Feeble man! Why don't you just keep quiet? Shut up! You know nothing. Our scriptures are beyond your comprehension. They contain everything. All knowledge is explained in them. They state that the lion is the king of all living things. No creature is greater than a lion, every other living thing exists only to serve us."

Pleading for his life the philosopher said, "O Lord of the forest! Our scriptures were not written by men, they were given to us by God himself!"

The lion roared again, making the whole forest shake: "O fool! Was your tongue only created for you to talk rubbish? The scriptures of lions are the only valid words here on earth. Anything else is nonsense. You will rot in Hell for insulting these great words. I am telling you the truth. My scriptures are the only true scriptures." The philosopher was dumbstruck. Even if he could have spoken, what was there left for him to say?

Man is entirely ego-centric, he has proclaimed himself the most excellent of creatures and the only one deserving of attention. He uses his intelligence for his own selfish ends. All the rules are in his favour. He does not bother about the hurt done to others, he thinks only of his own comfort and happiness. In this way he has brought about fear and dread on this earth. Man has lost his humanity because he has forgotten the essence of the great prophets' teachings.

Birds and beasts are just as important as man. No-one has the right to take the life of another being. If you recognise the existence of others and give them consideration, they will reciprocate. It is true that birds and beasts don't understand man's laws, but they do understand those of

nature. Fear brings about fear and violence begets violence, but fearlessness engenders fearlessness and love begets love.

Would you like it if someone hung a picture oozing blood on your bedroom or dining-room wall? How would you feel about it? Would any artist deliberately choose to celebrate scenes of violence in his paintings? Do you enjoy looking at scenes of violence and bloodshed? Can the screams of terrified animals be pleasant to the ear? Wouldn't you prefer to see the flowers blossom? Wouldn't you prefer to hear the merry chirping of birds? This is the law of nature. Man loves life and only life-giving scenes have the power to delight his mind.

Not only man, but every other creature loves life. All sentient beings understand the language of love and freedom from fear. While insects and other small animals like lizards and rats live alongside you, most birds and beasts like parrots, pigeons or ducks run away from you. These poor dumb animals are afraid of man. They are afraid we will catch and eat them. Wherever there is violence, there is also fear.

Whenever you are loving and compassionate, love and compassion will be generated everywhere. Wild animals like tigers, lions and deer come and sit beside seers meditating in their forest retreats. Why do they come? What do they get there? A feeling of security, of love and compassion. Instead of a feeling of hostility towards them, they find that the fountain of love and affection flows there. Cruelty breeds cruelty and brings distress to the cruel; compassion breeds compassion, and brings bliss to the compassionate. Throw a pebble into the water and countless ripples form. A voice in the stillness echoes and echoes a thousand times. In the same way our love and compassion awaken, answering echoes in every corner of creation. Cruel and sadistic feelings on the other hand produce a commensurate hatred and animosity in the atmosphere.

Our Indian culture has such an affinity with, and affection for, birds and beasts, that I sometimes think it is they who command

more respect and are almost more revered in our lives than man. In the Vedic culture, the Garuda (eagle) is Lord Vishnu's chosen 'vehicle'. Shiva mounts the bull Nandi. Lord Ganesh, the son of Shiva and Parvati, uses the rat. His elder brother, Kartikeya, has the peacock, now India's national bird. Goddess Laxmi travels on the owl, Saraswati on the swan, Durga, Chakreshvari and Ambika have the lion and Yamaraj has the buffalo. In mythologies all over the world many gods and goddesses are associated with a particular bird or beast. In this way we are introduced to a thread of oneness with all living creatures and taught to love each and every one of them.

The Jain religion embodies compassion. Of our twenty four Tirthankars, seventeen have been depicted with particular birds or beasts at their feet. The symbol of the first Tirthankar, Rishabhdev, is the bull. Ajitanath has the elephant, Sambhavanath, the horse, Abhinandannath, the monkey, Shantinath, the deer, Kunthunath, the goat and Parshvanath has the snake. This association of animals with the image of the Tirthankars is not just a decorative embellishment or an iconographic sign used for ease of identification. There are no astrological or other arcane mysteries encoded here. They are the outward signs that represent a great philosophy. If their purpose had been for identification alone, any sign or symbol could have been used. In my view three different concepts are clearly demonstrated here.

Firstly, they represent equality between man and animal. Man is not superior to the birds and beasts nor are they inferior to him. The symbols are the expression of the philosophy that as far as consciousness is concerned, every living being in creation is important.

Secondly, there is diversity amongst the birds and beasts. Each one has a special quality, i.e. the lion has strength, the bull is reliable and the elephant has gravitas. No living being is without a virtue of some kind. We should try to understand that each species has its own virtues. We should absorb these ideas and make them our own.

Thirdly, and most importantly, birds and beasts are worthy of love, affection, and respect. Until we respect all living things, note their different virtues and behave towards them as if they were our own children, brothers or colleagues, our consciousness will fall short of grasping the totality of creation.

By placing the birds and beasts at the feet of those it venerates, Jain culture has shown that we should not just be sympathetic towards them, but also become active partners in protecting and nurturing them. You will ask why the Jains need this message, because most Jains do not hurt animals or indulge in violent activities anyway. This is true, but it is not enough. Not hurting animals is one thing, but we must not turn a blind eye when animals are being tortured, destroyed or cruelly slaughtered. We should stop up this river of blood. Jainism should take a much more active stand in battling cruelty to animals, whilst also engaging in nurturing and protecting them.

The Jain religion befriends the whole world. To do this we must learn to love the birds and beasts, and teach this love to others. To love the birds and beasts is to love creation. To care for them is to care about our responsibility to the environment. In these times of global awakening we must let ahimsa manifest itself in the universal form of befriending and defending all forms of life.

Wisdom is not born of ego, but of love.
Love is not attachment, nor is it any kind of
passion. It is the natural flow of emotion from
the heart. Love knows neither hardship nor
burden. It is a pure cascade of inner bliss.
Apart from bliss, it has no other expression.
Search deep within yourself; the god of love is
always found there. Love is the perpetual
guiding force of any form of life. Love can
even understand emptiness. It is a useless
endeavour to write of love for it cannot be
encompassed within words. It is beyond
words. Love is innate, a natural emotion;
it is boundless.

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Glossary

Acharya	spiritual leader
Agam	canonical literature
Ahimsa	non-violence
Anekant	'many-pointed', the doctrine of the multiple facets of reality
Aparigrah	non-possession
Apta	realised one
Arhat	omniscient
Ashubh	inauspicious
Asi	the art of the sword
Avrati	one who has not taken vows
Avsarpini	regressive half cycle
Bhandars	libraries
Bhav-himsa	internal violence
Bhiksha	giving food to ascetics
Chaturmas	'four months', monsoon season
Chaturvidh	sangh four-fold order of the Jain community
Dana	donation, gift
Dharmashala	religious rest house
Diksha	initiation
Dravya-himsa	external violence
Ganadhar	the first mendicant disciples of a Tirthankar
Grantha	book
Gunasthanak	fourteen stages of purification
Gupti	refraining from wrongdoing
Himsa	violence
Homa	sacrifice
Jina	Tirthankar
Kalyanak	auspicious moment
Kalpa-vriksha	wish- granting tree
Karyakartta	skilled worker
Keval-gyan	omniscience
Kevali	omniscient
Krishi	the art of agriculture
Kshama	forgiveness
Kutiya	small hut

Masi	the art of writing
Mridangam	Indian percussion instrument
Muni	ascetic
Nirvan	'release from bondage', liberation
Nivrutti	abstinence
Papa	sin
Paryushan	Jain religious festival held during chaturmas
Prabhrit	small books
Prasad	distribution of sanctified offerings, usually food
Pravrutti	activity
Sadhna	spiritual development
Sadhu	male ascetic
Sadhvi	female ascetic
Samavasaran	holy assembly of the Jinas
Samiti	correct action
Sangh	religious community
Seva	service
Shahanai	an Indian wind instrument
Shaiv	a follower of Shiva
Shastra	scripture
Shiksha	education
Shivam	wellbeing
Shraman	ascetic
Shravak	layman
Shubh	auspicious
Siddha	liberated soul
Sundaram	beauty
Svadhyaya	introspective self-study
Swastika	auspicious symbol
Syadvad	doctrine of qualified assertion
Tapas	penance, austerities
Tirthankar	ford-maker, the omniscient spiritual teacher of the Jains
Tirth-bhumi	land of pilgrimage
Tirth-kshetra	place of pilgrimage
Upadhyaya	religious preceptor
Utsarpini	progressive half cycle
Vaishnavite	follower of Vishnu
Vrati	one who has taken vows

Acknowledgements

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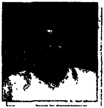
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